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C. W. A. SCOTT

[Photo: L.N.A.]

SCOTT'S BOOK

THE LIFE
AND
MILDENHALL-MELBOURNE FLIGHT
OF
C. W. A. SCOTT

TOLD BY HIMSELF

LONDON
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NOTE TO THE FIRST EDITION

As Mr. C. W. A. Scott's book is being published while he is still on his way back from Australia, I feel I should just like to make clear one or two points which concern the preparation of this narrative.

For almost a year before the take-off at Mildenhall, Scott had been concentrating on the flight. For the greater part of this time I was associated closely with him. It was at my suggestion that he came to my office day after day for about a month and gave me every word of his Life Story himself—up to the end of Chapter XIV in this book. The last chapter was cabled from Australia on his arrival at Melbourne.

The book was written, of course, in the hope that he would win, but it is on its own merits that he would like it to stand.

JOHN LEGGITT.

London,

November, 1934.

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

SEVERAL things have made possible the publication of Scott's own book within six weeks of his departure with Campbell Black from Mildenhall for Melbourne.

The greater part of the manuscript was written before he left. The last chapter was cabled from Australia. Six of the illustrations were brought back from Australia by Cathcart Jones and Waller on the return journey of their record flight to Australia and back. Messrs. Wyman and Sons, the printers, and the Grout Engraving Company, the block-makers, have both given us the quickest possible service to be obtained. *The Daily Telegraph* has assisted us with the Maps, and *The Times* has given us permission to reprint part of Chapter XII.

We are also particularly grateful to our own representative in Australia, Mr. William Smart.

**TO
MY FATHER
AND TO
THE PILOTS OF ALL COUNTRIES**

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A vote of confidence and a word of praise.

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CHAPTER I

FIRST FLIGHTS

In which I start at the beginning and give some account of the first twenty years of my life: how I left Westminster after two enjoyable years to spend the two unhappiest years of my life on a sugar plantation in British Guiana, how my father came to the rescue and obtained release from my contract, how I joined the Royal Air Force and met my best friend again, and how I had my first flying lessons, and finally got my "wings" on November 15th, 1923.

IF this is to be a life-story, I suppose I had better go back to the beginning of things, and confess that thirty-one years ago I was born in London.

I have been told so often I am an Australian that I have almost come to believe it. But Australia is not guilty; I owe it to her wonderful people to say so here and now.

I know the Commonwealth well, because I have lived there quite a lot, but I was born, I repeat, in London. My father is Charles Kennedy Scott, the musician. He is conductor of the Philharmonic Choir.

I was educated at Westminster. I liked school—just for a year or two. Then I had an urge to leave. That urge grew and grew until it was absolutely irresistible.

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One day, without hesitation and certainly without preparation, I found myself in 1920 outward bound for Demerara, South America, tied down to a five-year contract on a sugar plantation.

Any regrets I had in leaving school consisted solely of the fact that I was separated from my one great friend, Kit Denison. I was not to see him again for two years.

The voyage to Trinidad, British West Indies, was uneventful other than as an experience, and an anxiety of what lay ahead which engaged the mental attitude of a boy of seventeen.

My first real thrill came when watching the luggage being raised in cargo slings from the hold. I noticed one trunk in particular perched precariously on the summit of the others in the sling, and my joy when I saw this trunk lose its balance and crash into the hold was immense. I remained in a state of high jubilation until I was informed by a grinning deck-hand that that same trunk was my own! I arrived at Georgetown, British Guiana, with the trunk held together by rope and leaking clothes in an ominous manner.

This state of unrest and distress typified my sojourn in British Guiana during my eighteen months in that colony. I found myself in the society of men considerably older than myself. I worked in an atmosphere of toil and oppression, home-sickness and malaria, and, truthfully, hated each minute of my life out there. Rising at 4.30

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each morning, with a break of about two hours in the middle of the day for breakfast, one was lucky to finish the daily task by nine o'clock at night. All days were weekdays.

The sugar industry a few years after the war was in a very bad state, and this fact affected everyone—from the highest of us to the men slaving in the fields.

My one object was to save sufficient money to return to England, and carefully I hoarded each cent I could from my salary of about twenty pounds a month. I think I had saved a matter of twelve pounds, which represented an enormous sum in my eyes in those days, when, due to a slight breakdown in our sugar factory, I was allowed a three-days' holiday away from the estate. I took my horse and rode to a savannah some miles back, and there spent the only three happy days I had in British Guiana fishing, shooting, and swimming. On my return to the estate I discovered that my carefully hoarded savings had been stolen, and that I had to start all over again. Such a blow was almost more than I could stand.

I had still four years to run on my five-year contract, when I went down with malaria. Possibly it was the depressed spirit of my letters home that gave my people the first cause for alarm, or it might have been that initial shock of malaria, followed by many others during the next three months. At any rate there came a glorious day

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when a cable from London announced that my parents had arranged release from my contract, and that a passage had been booked for me in the s.s. *Specialist* from Georgetown to London.

In the light of later experience, I am positive the eighteen months' hard labour, anxiety, and home-sickness actually did me much good, but I was considerably older than my eighteen-and-a-half years when I landed in London one cold April morning after that ghastly period abroad.

I remember two days before we docked I climbed the rigging of the foremast of the small ship to catch a glimpse of the Scilly Isles, which were not visible from deck. The sight well compensated me for the dirty condition of my hands and clothes on descending from my precarious perch on the look-out of the foremast.

I loafed around London and the country for a while, and then my love of small boats persuaded me to accept a job as clerk to a yacht-outfitting firm on the East Coast.

I had my own small boat, given me by my father on my return from abroad. He had named her *Essequibo*, after the district in which I had lived in British Guiana. The memory was so distasteful that I immediately rechristened the boat, which I could see tugging at her moorings from my office window. As soon as the day's work was over I pushed my dinghy afloat, and sailed until it was dark.

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The four walls of the office were too small for me, and I knew that my job would not last.

About that time I met a man, not much older than myself, who was going to join the Royal Air Force. He suggested I should join, too. Without much thought of the future or even of the present, I sent in an application, and was eventually given an interview and a medical examination.

Somehow or other all the really important steps in my life have been prompted by the whim of a moment, and have never been deliberate.

I received instructions to report for duty, in uniform, on December 9th, 1922, and join No. 2 F.T.S., Duxford, for flying training. In the interval I met Kit Denison. After a chat about this and that and of things that had happened since our previous meeting, we talked of the future.

"What are you doing now, Kit?" I asked, and he replied with an air of superiority: "Oh, I'm in the Royal Air Force." Then he watched for the effect of the news. I was terribly pleased, and waited for him to put the same question to me.

"And what are you going to do, Charles?" he at last inquired.

"Funnily enough," I replied, "I am in the Royal Air Force, too," which, though actually a lie at that time, would not be a lie three weeks hence.

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"Where are you stationed?" we asked each other simultaneously, and the reply from both was the same: "No. 2 F.T.S., Duxford."

Getting down to dates, we discovered we were joining the same unit on the same date, and because of my friendship for Kit Denison it was only then that I was really glad to be commissioned in His Majesty's Royal Air Force. I suppose one's friends and friendships are the backbone of life.

On December 9th of that year, then, very nervous but very pleased with myself and my appearance in the uniform of a pilot officer of the Royal Air Force, I boarded a train at Liverpool Street in company of several other young men of similar appearance and self-satisfied pride. We were going to the jumping-off place of the flying career which I have followed faithfully through many vicissitudes and countries ever since.

Though my labours in British Guiana had made me older than my years, certainly my authority over the coloured labour there had not made me keen on taking orders. I was very undisciplined, though actually I could enforce discipline myself.

We were divided into squads, each squad having a squad commander. Though I could appreciate and understand and respect officers of rank senior to myself, I could not, in this embryo period of my service, see any difference between my squad commander and myself. We were of the same rank.

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His name was Newbigging, and he had seen a lot of service with the Scots Guards in the war. Newbigging was a great big fellow of six foot four or five, and, quite rightly, he disliked my bumptious and precocious attitude. I forget the actual incident that led to our small but heated argument, but I do remember its sequel was an assignation in the camp gymnasium at six o'clock that evening.

I was big, strong, and well developed for my eighteen and a half years, and the combat lasted a mere minute. The sympathies of my companions before our bout of fisticuffs changed to admiration with my success. How flexible is human nature. This contest was noised round the camp, and I was sent off as one of a team to box in the group championships. Having won the bout in my weight class there, I was selected eventually to box in the R.A.F. championships at Halton.

I learnt many new things at No. 2 Flying Training School: the principle of the internal-combustion engine—hitherto a sealed book to me—aircraft construction, rigging, wireless, gunnery, navigation, and Royal Air Force drill, which I hated most of all, and practical flying, which I loved from my first trip in the sky.

I had always exulted in the feeling of command I had over small boats, and this love of command survived to the aeroplanes I flew. The delight of feeling immediate response of the controls to touch

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and whim, the glory of the landscape below, and the conviction that this was a big man's job, all overshadowed the fact that actually I was a very poor beginner.

We were taught originally in Avro 504K machines, and it was in these with anxiety that I saw all my fellow pilots making their first solo flights while I was still struggling with the intricacies of landing.

There came a day, however, when my own turn arrived, and it was with some amazement I discovered myself in the air without the reassuring sight of my instructor's head in the front cockpit. I think I was so amazed that I forgot either to be anxious or nervous.

A "first solo" consists of a take-off, a short circuit of the aerodrome, and the landing. If the landing is good the pupil's instructor will probably tell him to do another, or even more. My first landing was bad, and I received a further half-hour's dual instruction before being sent "solo" again. Nevertheless, in the mess the night after my first solo, I honoured the time-old custom of buying wine for my instructor, and, drinking with him myself, felt a far grander fellow than I really was.

There was keen rivalry among all the pupils in camp, and Kit Denison, from whom I was inseparable, was hours ahead of me with his flying. I liked navigation second only to practical flying.

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It was about this time that suddenly I sensed a thin dividing line between life and death. Hardstaff, one of our pupils, met with a fatal accident, and the shock of it unnerved us all. I remember that I among others wept unashamedly at his funeral.

Somehow, before this fatality, it had seemed rather amusing for an aeroplane to be broken and smashed, and the full significance of a crash was lost on us.

I firmly believe the standard of flying in the aerodrome was much improved by each such sad occurrence.

In flying schools in those days pupils who had received one year's training passed out at the end of it. New pupils arrived every six months, so that during one's year at a training school the mess consisted of first-term pupils, second-term pupils, and the staff.

There were three fire-places in the ante-room at Duxford, and the first-term pupils would congregate about only one, and never any other, while second-term pupils had their own fire-side, and the staff theirs. A few of the bolder second-termers sometimes mixed with the staff, but the staff were their superiors, and never left their own domain. However, in spite of this, the atmosphere was congenial and companionable.

Towards the end of my first term at Duxford I went to box in the Royal Air Force championships,

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and, winning the heavy-weight title, returned to camp to receive the personal commendation of my commanding officer, Wing-Commander Sidney Smith, D.S.O., known to the staff as "Crasher." It was reported that he had crashed no fewer than sixty-three times, which was as fictitious as it was meant to be generous. He informed me I had been selected to box for the R.A.F. against the Army, Navy, and Marines.

I remember, as though it were yesterday, the afternoon before my fight against the Army representative. In later years I can only think of its similarity to the night before starting a long flight. I was frightened and appalled at my cowardice, and I am sure this and subsequent stage frights were my undoing.

In the dressing-room of Aldershot Drill Hall before going into the ring, Lieutenant Capper, my opponent, held out two enormous gloves and asked me if I had any objection to his using those, as the standard gloves would not fit his hands. Had he held out a meat axe I would have acquiesced as meekly, for I knew that nothing could prevent him doing with me just what he liked.

The R.A.F. must have had many good champions, but in the annals of their boxing I must have been the worst. I lost that fight in the second round, and was terribly glad it did not last longer. Capper went on to win the amateur championship of England.

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My return to Duxford on that occasion, though less triumphant, had certainly a far greater appreciation of being home again. I had a month's leave after that, and went sailing in France, Belgium, and Holland, skippering a small boat for a great friend of mine until his own son arrived and relieved me.

I remember I flew back in a Dutch K.L.M. machine from Amsterdam and tried to impress upon my fellow passengers that I was a pilot of equal merit to the one who was then flying us. In reality, of course, I was still very much in the tadpole stage.

During my second term at Duxford, proper Service machines were given us to fly. Bristols and D.H.9a's were the types then in use. Strangely enough, although I was not brilliant on Avros, I acquired more readily the ability to fly these Service types, so that when two Sopwith Snipes—a machine popularly supposed, in our young minds, to be a death trap—were brought to the station and four pupils selected to receive instructions on them, I was chosen as one of the four—to my great joy and the sympathies of my friends. Kit Denison was not selected, and this omission pleased me tremendously.

I loved these machines from the first, and that was just as well, because I had several years wherein to prove any distaste. These Snipes were certainly tricky little machines to fly compared

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with others of that day and of the present time owing to their big rotary engines and attendant gyroscopic action. This gyroscopic action gave the machine a tendency always to turn to the right, so that one was continually flying with the left rudder to prevent this deviation.

Our passing-out tests, apart from written examinations, consisted of three cross-country flights and a height test of 15,000 feet. I had never been as high as 15,000 feet before, but I appreciated the fact that such an altitude was conducive to safety.

On descending from this height test and reaching a level of about 6,000 feet, I made up my mind to loop. Of course, I had looped Avros and Bristols before, but never a machine which had this great gyroscopic action.

I put the nose of the Snipe down and obtained an absolutely unnecessary high speed. Instead of easing the control column gently back and flying round the looping 'plane, I snatched violently at the column, and for a few seconds hardly knew what had happened. Sky and the ground were a complete blur, rotating into each other in the most uncanny fashion. I got into the inverted position, and did not know what to do.

Actually I did what many better pilots would have done under like conditions—let everything go. The machine righted itself and I was able to land, but I realised in that moment that aeroplanes

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had to be treated with respect, and that there is a deal of difference when a machine is in the hands of a novice and in the hands of an experienced and good pilot.

After one of the three cross-country flights, I landed back at the aerodrome at a time when there was a very strong wind blowing. I should have waited until mechanics came out to hold my wing-tips down. Actually I tried to taxi in without assistance. The wind got under one wing-tip and turned my machine inelegantly on to its back. There was no danger, and I could not have been hurt, but on climbing out of the machine I realised that this occurrence could conceivably be termed a "crash." I ran to my quarters, and, getting my camera, started to take photographs of the overturned machine.

At this point my Flight Commander came up, justly indignant. I was to report to the Flight Officer immediately.

"Don't you know that even an experienced pilot would not attempt to taxi in such a high wind?" he barked.

My reply of: "But, sir, I am not experienced or I would have realised that," sent him into a choler which gave me an extra afternoon's duty superintending the removal of the damaged machine.

I got my "wings" on November 15th, 1923, and during leave received instructions to report

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for duty to No. 32 Fighter Squadron, Kenley, which was to be my first and only Service unit. I joined this squadron exactly a year after arrival at Duxford, having completed some sixty-three hours' flying in all.

CHAPTER II

SERVICE UNIT

In which I tell of some experiences with No. 32 Fighter Squadron, Kenley : how my first inglorious flight ended disastrously, how I retrieved to some extent this first bad impression, how I was selected to take a short navigation course at the R.A.F. Base, Calshot, how I successfully defended my title as the heavyweight champion of the R.A.F., and how I learned night flying and, after much practice, mastered the art of aerobatics.

ON reporting to a Service unit for the first time, one notices immediately the difference from the Flying Training School.

At the F.T.S. one is merely a pupil of little social or Service standing. With the squadron, however, one is treated as part and parcel of a working concern.

In December, 1923, No. 32 Squadron had been re-formed but a few months, and the personnel consisted of our C.O., Squadron-Leader Tom Howe, our Adjutant, Flight-Lieut. Walker, one flight-commander, and three other officers. The machines we had then were only two Avros and three Snipes. The balance, of course, were under construction and expected daily.

I had met our Adjutant, Peter Walker, before, as he was the R.A.F. featherweight champion, and

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I had come in contact with him while boxing. He was kindness itself and made me feel at home from the first minute.

Because we were so short of machines, each one was highly prized, but I, with new wings resplendent on my left breast, immediately asked permission to fly one of the Snipes, as much to show my enthusiasm and keenness as from the actual pleasure I derived from piloting them. This request readily approved, I took one of the Snipes into the sky on a first flight in my squadron.

It is with shame I have to admit that, having taken the machine off the ground, I tried to show my ability to fly by attempting the most outrageous manoeuvres. I did climbing turns near the ground, silly dives and zooms at the tarmac, and committed all the other indiscretions of the beginner. Though believing I was putting up a good show, in reality I was creating a bad impression. In order to settle any doubt in my mind, I finished this first inglorious flight by stalling my machine at thirty feet and completely writing it off.

As ambulance and fire tender rushed toward my crash, I was conscious of an extreme misery. Almost I wished I had some bodily hurt that would allow me, by removal in the ambulance, to escape the eyes and criticisms of my fellow-officers. As it was, I had to walk to the adjutant's office and report the breakage with the most abject humility. There is no scorn more withering than that of

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silence. I had made a bad mark that would have taken many months to live down had it not been that I had the chance a little later to redeem my fault.

Some days after this unfortunate accident I was detailed to fly to Eastchurch with a man named Pumphrey in an Avro to collect another Snipe, which Pumphrey would pilot back to Kenley while I flew the safer and the easier Avro. Our trip to Eastchurch was uneventful, Pumphrey doing both piloting and navigating.

Taking over the Snipe we flew back to Kenley independently. It was winter-time and days were short. One of those fogs that appear from nowhere in the London district in December suddenly came up, but I was able to creep home dodging chimneys and church steeples, and following roads and railway lines to the security of my own aerodrome. Pumphrey, however, was not so fortunate, and, losing his way completely, crashed in a Catford park. This crash of his completely overshadowed my own of a few days previously, and that day he took the limelight for bad flying in my stead.

Apart from damaging the machine, Pumphrey damaged himself, and we all went to see him in the local hospital that evening. He was not badly hurt, but was in a general ward and very conscious of his surroundings. We had smuggled a bottle of whisky into hospital and left it under his bed-clothes, after which he assured us the night would pass far more happily.

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About that time every squadron was to have its navigation officer, and somebody had to be appointed from No. 32 Squadron for the navigation course.

Possibly because I had proved myself rather inefficient at flying and the C.O. wished to safeguard the few machines we had—or perhaps because I had passed out at my Flying Training School with 100 per cent. in the navigation examination—I found myself posted to the R.A.F. base, Calshot, for a short navigation course.

Calshot was, and still is, I think, one of the nicest situations of any of the R.A.F. stations. The mess was comfortable, and all our work was done at the end of Calshot Spit, a mile away from the mess.

The walk down the Spit by the sea each morning was a daily pleasure, but the work when I arrived almost baffled me. The delicacies of spherical trigonometry were staggering ; my school days had found me lacking in mathematical qualities.

There were twelve of us on the course when it began, but after three weeks our number was reduced to eight. The other four had found the task beyond them, and they returned happily, though ingloriously, to their own units.

Our theoretical navigation was tempered with practical navigation, for we used to act as navigators in the big flying boats at Calshot, and navigated them to all parts of the Channel and the



[Photo : L.N.A.]

SCOTT AT THE HELM OF HIS YACHT "NEPHELEIA."

" I had always exulted in the feeling of command I had over small boats, and this love survived to the aeroplanes I flew."

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Channel Islands. Though we used to fly in these machines we did none of the flying ourselves, merely juggling with drift planes, parallel rulers, charts, and compasses, and passing on our calculations and instructions to the pilot.

The course lasted three months, and was a very happy time for me until the passing-out examination. I knew my own incapacibilities, and realised I had absorbed but little knowledge. Sixty per cent. of the maximum marks was required for a pass, and while others were aiming at 100, my one hope was to obtain the minimum that entitled me to a pass.

The examinations lasted three days, and the results were known soon after. Squadron-Leader Cook, chief instructor on the course, came into our lecture-room to read out the placings. He prefaced his remarks with the announcement that there had been no failures, and I was very happy until he added that, though seven of us had a right to be pleased with ourselves, there was one considerably below the standard of the others. Even had he not looked straight at me as he said it, I should still have known. Sixty per cent. was required for a pass, and 60 per cent. exactly was the mark I obtained. I was sorry for Squadron-Leader Cook, but rather pleased with myself. I have not a mathematical brain.

The R.A.F. individual boxing championships for 1924 took place about this time, and I successfully

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defended my title. This meant that, instead of returning immediately to my unit, I went to Lee-on-Solent with the rest of the R.A.F. team to train for the Imperial Services Boxing Association Championships, to be held at Portsmouth.

Again I proved an unworthy champion of my Service, but had the satisfaction this time of putting up a far better show than I had done the previous year.

I returned to my unit to find that the squadron had its full complement of aircraft, but because I had been so long off regular flying, I had to suffer the indignity of more dual instruction before being allowed to go up solo. Actually I was very grateful, for the memory of my first flight in 32 Squadron still rankled.

Flight-Lieut. Donald Fleming, the officer then in charge of "A" Flight, was my instructor, and soon corrected my "nerves" and incapacity. After my first solo flight in 32 Squadron, I never crashed another machine until well established and entrenched in "the Service."

No. 32 Squadron was supposed to be a mobile unit, and in July of that same year we were ordered to Bircham Newton, near Hunstanton, for co-operation exercises with the Territorial gunners. All our equipment went by lorries and the troops by train, whilst we each flew our own aeroplanes.

Our flight there had one outstanding mark

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against it. We left Kenley in three individual flights of three, but, running into bad weather over London, we soon lost our formations and flight leaders, so that we made our way individually northwards. The weather was not good, so that after an hour's flying I was glad to see Bircham Newton Aerodrome, and more than overjoyed to find that I was the sole aeroplane to reach there. I imagined it a feather in my cap, which would still further obliterate that regrettable episode of the day I joined 32. The weather improved later in the evening, and the rest of our machines arrived quite safely.

At that time it was a popular belief that there was a great deal of difference in the mentality of a fighter squadron pilot and a bombing squadron pilot. There were two bombing squadrons permanently stationed at Bircham Newton, and I remember how we of "32" imagined ourselves of a superior calibre, which, in the light of after consideration, was quite wrong.

We attached ourselves to their Mess and treated it as our own without the reserve that guests should have for their hosts.

Our operations at Bircham Newton consisted of flying ourselves, as targets for these anti-aircraft gunners. By day we would do flight formation patrols at 10,000 feet over their guns, and by night individual flights over the same areas. We were supposed to be a night-flying squadron, but few

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of us at that time had had much experience in night flying.

Before a pilot was sent off to fly by himself at night he was told to do three or four landings at dusk. If these proved satisfactory he would be sent off to make his trip in complete darkness.

Peter Walker, who at this time had taken over the duties of "A" Flight Commander, sent me off to do my dusk landings, but I prolonged these without his authority until after dark, and made my first night landing without preliminary practice. We had two Holt flares, one on either wing tip, and approaching the flare path to land one would ignite one of these flares electrically from a button in the cockpit, which flare would give one sufficient light to land by. On a nice night there was no better fun than night flying, but the Snipe, always a difficult little machine to land, was made more so by conditions after dark.

About this time there was keen inter-flight rivalry, and Peter Walker encouraged myself and Broadway (who was the other officer in our flight) to practice aerobatics and night flying, so that our flight would be outstanding amongst the others.

I personally had been a little scared of aerobating the Snipe, but Donald Fleming, C Flight Commander, was one of the finest Snipe pilots in the Service at that time, and set an example we all tried to emulate. Heaven knows the weird

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antics we performed in trying to execute the careful manœuvres of good aerobatics, but there came a day when looping a Snipe presented no difficulties, slow rolls had been mastered, and I discovered that I could fly my machine quite capably upside down.

We were not popular as a squadron with the two squadrons at Bircham Newton, but, as I have said, we did not act as guests should towards hosts, and I remember quite well how the night before our departure for our own unit our own troops made their way to the officers' mess and shouted, "We want the officers of 32 Squadron." When we made our appearance, which we deemed advisable, our own troops gave us three cheers and returned to their own quarters. This, if for nothing else, was typical of the happy feelings that existed in 32 Squadron. We, that is the officers, were then invited to the sergeants' mess for a drink, and many of us accepted their invitation. It was a grand party, I remember, and our return from their mess to our own, though dignified, was a little hilarious. We had to pass, in the course of those few hundred yards, some houses that were under construction. The following morning the first working party should have been taken by the Adjutant, and though his absence was not alarming, it was nevertheless unusual, particularly so, as some two hours later he had not been found either in his own quarters or the sergeants' mess. A

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surreptitious search for him was made, and after considerable wanderings we found him fast asleep in one of those houses under construction. We flew back to our own unit that afternoon.

Our work at Kenley was continuous and varied. Flight formation flying, squadron formation, gunnery, and aerobatics took up the greater part of our flying time. Night flying was carried out most nights when decent weather conditions prevailed, and there was also searchlight co-operation to be done with the Searchlight Forces at Farnborough, thirty-five miles away.

The Snipe was a difficult machine to fly in formation owing to the fact that the engine was controlled by both throttle and fine adjustment, and it was not too easy to keep a definite position.

Our flights by night to Farnborough were sometimes full of thrills, for London districts have a habit of producing queer weather at a moment's notice. Wireless in those days had not been adapted to Service types, so that frequently one departed to Farnborough to do one's patrol there in good weather and on returning to Kenley found one's aerodrome enveloped in fog. This was all splendid experience, and we were fortunate in not breaking the machines or having any serious crashes.

I remember one night, while flying over Farnborough district, being caught in the beams of

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several searchlights. I suddenly noticed what appeared to be a formation of machines directly above me. They seemed so close that I immediately turned away from them to avoid any possible collision, but they followed me with uncanny determination. It was not until several minutes had elapsed that I realised that this phantom formation was merely the reflection of my own machine from each individual searchlight on the cloud base a few hundred feet above me. There was another occasion when I flew towards Farnborough at night, and running into fog, completely lost my way. Parachutes in those days, if heard of, had not been adapted to Service machines, but I am pretty positive that had I had a parachute on that occasion I would have abandoned my machine and descended to earth by it. As it was, there was nothing else to do but try and locate my position. At all times it is an uncanny feeling being lost in fog, but on this occasion there was the overwhelming darkness of night and a moderate petrol supply to make it worse. It was an anxious half-hour. Fortunately, this particular fog was fairly local, and I managed to find my way out of it and back to my own aerodrome, but without having actually made contact with the searchlight brigade with which I was supposed to be co-operating.

The standard of flying in our squadron had improved enormously in twelve months, and there

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was not one of us who could not perform the most difficult aerobatics. Our chief rival was No. 25 Squadron, which was stationed at Hawkinge, Kent.

CHAPTER III

AEROBATICS

In which I tell of exciting and spectacular flights : how our squadron was chosen for the aerobatics at the Wembley Exhibition, how my father thought that I was dead, how one fateful peace-time week lost us four machines and one pilot, how the new Gloster Grebes supplanted the old Snipes, how I nearly came to grief at the R.A.F. Display, and how "Blues" Broadway met his death in the machine that might have been mine.

BECAUSE we were a night-flying squadron we were paid the compliment of doing flight aerobatics over the Stadium at Wembley during the Wembley Exhibition. Our programme for this was as follows :

Our machines were all painted black, but the perimeters of the under-side of our wings, fuselage, and tail planes were picked out in little white lights. We would fly these machines from Kenley to Northolt before dark and wait there for our zero hour, when we would take off and fly the few remaining miles to Wembley. At a given signal we would put on all these lights and fly in a formation of three round the Stadium. At another signal we would put out our lights and pretend to attack a fortified position inside the Stadium ring. Each machine had two fixed front guns, through

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which we would fire blank ammunition. Each machine had also a rack containing six pyrotechnics. These we would scratch on a piece of matchboarding. If they ignited, we would throw them overboard after counting three; they were then timed to burst under our tail. Thus we made the effect of shrapnel for the guns on the ground, whilst they for us made explosions on the ground which were supposed to be the bombs we were dropping. It was obvious that they could not fire real ammunition nor ourselves drop bombs.

Although the Snipe was a wonderfully nice aeroplane to fly when one had mastered its idiosyncrasies, it had none of the reliability of the machines of the present day. Forced landings through engine failure were not unknown, but on occasions such as those over Wembley at night it was obvious that any forced landing would have to be made outside the Wembley Exhibition grounds. There was a small field allotted for this purpose, but it was very unsuitable and too small to pull off a safe forced landing. It had one flare in the middle of it to mark its whereabouts, and we had to crash in this field.

At the conclusion of our bombing and shooting, the formation would divide and each machine, putting on its lights again, would perform individual aerobatics. Although I never saw this exhibition of ours from the ground, we were all told that it was a highly entertaining spectacle.

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We flew six nights a week, and we always had one reserve machine flying unilluminated a short distance away, so that it might take the place of any machine that force-landed. The first bad episode we had was the failure of Broadway's engine when he was flying very low. He managed to manœuvre his machine to our little forced-landing ground and crashed it near the flare. He scrambled out unhurt, and two seconds after his machine went up in flames.

The rest of us flying back to Northolt were oppressed with the knowledge that one of us had been burnt to death, but owing to the darkness we could not tell which, and it was with great jubilation that on landing at Northolt we discovered that Broadway was unhurt.

By a strange coincidence, my mother and father were spectators in the Wembley Stadium that night, and as soon as it was seen that a machine was forced-landing and the glare of his burning machine interpreted, the rumour rushed round the Stadium that one of our pilots had been burnt to death.

I, not knowing that my people were in the Stadium, obviously never thought of reassuring them by telephone, and it was not until nearly two o'clock in the morning, at which time we were still celebrating Broadway's escape from death, that a very distressed male parent pushed into the ante-room and embraced me as though one back from the grave.

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To this day I cannot understand the attitude of the authorities. The rumour having circulated that one of our pilots had been burnt to death, my father immediately presented himself to the Stadium authorities and implored them for information, which they would not give. When he rang up Northolt he was told to apply to the Air Ministry. He rang up Kenley and was told by them that they could say nothing, but that the Air Ministry would make a statement. He rang up the Air Ministry, but they were strictly guarded and would mention neither name nor place. I dare not imagine my mother's distress, and it was only by virtue of the fact that my father himself journeyed to the Mess at Northolt that she was able to be reassured of our welfare. That occasion was the only time I have ever seen my father drink two large whiskies and sodas, one immediately following the other.

We did exactly the same show next year at Wembley, where was staged a piece called "London Defended," but in between we also put up a very similar show at the Aldershot Tattoo, only on this occasion we flew from Farnborough Aerodrome.

Peter Walker led the flight at the Aldershot Tattoo, and one night both Broadway and I knew that in the arena, among the spectators of the Tattoo, there was to be a girl whom Peter was more than fond of. He had made no pretence

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about her presence, and suggested that we should put up a better show than usual.

Each of our three machines, as I have said, was illuminated underneath with white lights. Imagine Broadway's and my amazement when we saw Peter changing his white lights to red. We realised immediately the significance of this act. Peter's girl was not to be in any doubt as to which machine Peter was flying. Broadway thwarted this idea, for both he and I immediately changed our white lights to red also. Peter was very cross and his lady terribly amused.

During the few days of this Aldershot Tattoo the Farnborough Mess gave a dance, to which we, being attached to their station, should automatically have received invitations, and the omission of which gave us no mean slight. Our retaliation was simple but effective. Instead of using all our pyrotechnics over the arena, we each saved two for bombing the Mess premises, and after our show, whilst several couples were resting in the cool of the night air in the Mess gardens, we released our remaining cartridges on them. One of these was more effective than we had hoped, for it actually travelled unexploded through the open Mess door to burst inside the Mess. Fortunately that was our last night there, for we had outstayed our welcome though we had more than held our own.

The next show that we did at Wembley had

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more serious consequences. There was one week that stands out well in my mind. On the Monday, Donald Fleming, who was leading the flight in place of Peter Walker, who had been promoted and posted elsewhere, in striking one of his pyrotechnics held the cartridge too long, or it may have been that it was a volleyed fuse, for instead of throwing an unexploded cartridge overboard, which should have burst under his tail, it exploded in his right hand, breaking it all up. He put up a remarkably fine performance when flying his machine back to Northolt with his left hand, his right bleeding profusely all the time, and after landing and taxiing to the tarmac, switched off and collapsed. For many hours it was thought that amputation would be necessary, but I am glad to say that his hand is as good as ever to-day. The Tuesday of that week was uneventful, but on the Wednesday a lad called Woodyatt (who, incidentally, had been in my term at Duxford), taking the place of Broadway that night, half-rolled too near the ground and crashed, killing himself instantly. The Thursday night saw another machine crash in our forced-landing field, and the same thing happened on Friday and Saturday. Thus in one week alone, in peace-time, we lost four machines and one pilot, not to mention the accident to Fleming's hand.

Broadway and Woodyatt had been inseparable companions, and although we all felt Woodyatt's

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loss, none of us felt it as keenly as Broadway himself.

There was a very popular tune about this time called "Broadway Blues." Broadway was always known as "Blues."

Our old Snipes of 1925 were being replaced with machines of a more modern type—Gloster Grebes. These machines, compared with our old ones, had a better and more commanding performance. They had a top speed of at least thirty miles an hour more.

There was a batch of six Grebes to be collected from Cheltenham, and six of us went down to fly them back to our unit. Each of us having tested our own machine and accepted it, we were then to fly back, led by our Commanding Officer, in formation to Kenley. It was a very cold January afternoon, and having received instructions from the C.O. to follow him home, we took off together. We ran into thick weather, however, and all but myself lost the C.O.'s machine in the fog.

When flying in formation behind a leader one has little time to navigate oneself, as one's eyes are kept permanently on the leading machine, but when it was getting dark as well as foggy I drew away a little from his machine to make certain of our whereabouts. Almost at that moment we passed over an aerodrome and the C.O., waving me away, prepared to land.

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Owing to the fog and failing light, I deemed it advisable to let him land first, rather than in formation. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when I saw the C.O. attempt to land in a field outside this aerodrome on which there were bill-posts. It was obvious that he had not seen the aerodrome himself. His landing was marked with a sudden determination, for he made his goal between two particularly solid posts, and, ripping the wings completely off his machine, dug his nose into the ground and turned over. I landed on the aerodrome, to discover it was Stag Lane Aerodrome. It was the first time I had landed on that aerodrome, which was to be one of great importance to me. The C.O. was unhurt and we had to stay there the night.

Although we were getting new machines in the Squadron, we still had a few of our old Snipes. It was very interesting to discover the difference between the fighting qualities of these and the new Grebes. Owing to the gyroscopic action of the rotary engine in the Snipe we all found that the Snipe could readily out-manceuvre the Grebe, but the Grebe, owing to its higher speed, could attack and retreat at will.

About this time our flying areas were limited to aerodromes within "Fighting Areas." We were not supposed to land on other aerodromes, except in case of necessity. I knew people living about eighty miles away from our aerodrome whom I



[Photo: L.N.A.]

SCOTT BEING GREETED BY SIR CHARLES KINGSFORD SMITH AFTER HIS FIRST
RECORD FLIGHT

"Every now and then I caught myself saying to whosoever was near me
'My God, I'm glad it's all over.'"

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could visit by air, attempt to amuse them with some aerobatics, and fly home without landing. Often I would drop message bags on their lawns, these message bags containing expressions of goodwill.

The Air Ministry were very much against low flying and low aerobatics, but one imagined that when one was away and out of sight, one could do pretty well what one liked.

On one occasion I dived down at the house of my friends in the usual manner and hurled my message bag overboard, but, being a little careless on this occasion, I did not throw the message bag overboard cleanly, and a streamer got foul of the elevator king-post. The dead weight of the message bag was in such a position that it was hitting violently on the upper surface of my elevator, and the Snipe, being a sensitive machine fore and aft, this vibration of the elevator caused it to back alarmingly. I tried slow rolls and reverted flying, and all manner of things, to get rid of the streamer and weight caught in the king-post, but all of these manœuvres were of no avail. I had to make a landing so that I might get out of the machine and detach the message bag.

I chose a field quite near this house, where the land seemed smooth and hard, but on landing found the ground so soft that my wheels became embedded in the soft soil and the machine turned over on to its back. The accident itself did not

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worry me unduly except that I knew I might get into trouble because of my misdemeanour, and I reported by telephone immediately that I had had to make a forced landing through engine failure.

It was always the custom in the event of a forced landing for the R.A.F. station nearest the scene of any forced landing to collect and possibly repair the damaged aeroplane, and in this particular case a crash party was sent from Marlesham Heath, thirty miles away. The machine crashed on a Saturday morning. Saturday afternoons were usually holidays for troops and officers, so that the crash party, consisting of a flight-lieutenant, a sergeant and six men, were very wrathful at being done out of their afternoon's recreation, particularly so because by the time they had arrived it had begun to rain steadily.

When this crash party arrived the officer-in-charge immediately asked me the cause of the forced landing, and I told him I thought it must have been due to sticking valves in the engine. Unfortunately he was a technical officer, and doubted my assertion. His doubts were confirmed when, turning the machine right side up again, he saw my message bag and streamer still attached to the king-post, which I had forgotten to clear in the excitement of the crash.

The rain and its attendant misery made them all very cross, and I began to see a lot of trouble ahead of me, but my friends jumped into the

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breach and, feeding the officer-in-charge soothing drinks and supplying dry garments, soon won him on our side. At the same time, I know there was grave suspicion in the mind of my own Commanding Officer. About this time, too, we had a new Station Commander at Kenley, who was a far stricter disciplinarian than we had previously had and who enforced all regulations in detail and permitted no elasticity of interpretation. An Air Ministry weekly Order had just come out that any aerobatics performed must be executed at a height of not less than two thousand feet. A previous low level had been one thousand, which we had rather disregarded, performing most of our aerobatics under this height.

One afternoon I was flying my Snipe over our aerodrome at Kenley and flew over the aerodrome several times upside down at a height considerably below that described. Without landing, I flew away from the aerodrome and did not return for an hour. After my return, however, an orderly told me to report to my own C.O. This took me at once to the Station Commander, who asked me if it was I who had been doing inverted flying over the aerodrome a short while before, and when I answered "Yes," he told me I could consider myself under arrest. I was under arrest thirty-one days prior to the court-martial that ensued—not allowed to use the Mess premises other than my own quarters. It was a very weary

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and miserable month, and during the whole of it I was oppressed by the thought of the court-martial then pending.

On my own admission I was guilty and saw no chance of reprieve, but the law is a funny thing, and because I did not land immediately after my alleged offence but remained absent from the aerodrome for about an hour, and because no one had actually seen the number of my machine, I was acquitted.

During the actual trial itself, I said nothing other than write a few scribbled notes to the officer conducting my defence, but as time wore on I realised that, although they knew I had been guilty of the offence, legally they could not prove it. While the Court was deliberating its findings I, as the prisoner, was marched outside the room, and I waited very anxiously and miserably for twenty whole minutes. The Court orderly then appeared and told me the Court was ready to deliver its findings. I marched in and heard briefly the fact that I was not guilty of the offence with which I was charged.

There had been several officers attending this Court under instruction, and I spoke to them afterward and mentioned the agony of that suspense of twenty minutes, and they laughed and said that the actual findings of the Court lasted two minutes only and that the other eighteen were merely to worry me, which was my only punishment.

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I was then due for leave and had filled in my leave form for the thirty-one days' leave I had still left of that year, which had to be taken before the end of April. My leave form went up before the C.O., who told me politely but firmly that I had been bother enough recently and could just stay where I was. He was a fine C.O., Squadron Leader Lale, and we all loved him.

I really think that I was merely a scapegoat for a lot of others.

Soon after this we began practising for the R.A.F. Display. Our squadron were to put up an exhibition of flight-converging bombing, and I was also selected in that year to do individual aerobatics on a Snipe. I was terribly pleased at this latter, for I was given a brand new machine and allowed to paint it red, and, furthermore, was allowed to practise my aerobatics at a low altitude, as these would have to be performed fairly low at the display itself. I looked forward very keenly to my own individual performance, and when the day of the display arrived was thrilled but not in the least nervous.

Air-Commodore Grew, who was in charge of the display that year, had impressed on all the participating pilots the absolute necessity of adhering to a rigidly punctual programme. If a flight had to start at 14.10 hours, it had to start at 14.10, and not one second later. My own show was in the luncheon interval, and I was given

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seven minutes to do my stuff. Promptly on time I took off in my machine. which I considered the best Snipe I had ever flown. Like motor-cars some aeroplanes of similar type seem better than others. After only two minutes' flying, during which time I had been giving mostly left-hand and right-hand slow rolls, a flying wire broke in the near edge of the port side. I should have landed at once, but I was disappointed at my performance being cut short and also a little anxious about not completing the seven minutes allotted to me. I started to fly upside down then. Knowing the strain in an inverted position would come more on the landing wires I remained flying upside down, but watching closely what effect that broken flying wire might have. I noticed at first an imperceptible quiver in the trailing edge of my port top plane, and when this increased I suddenly remembered that I had a table booked at the Savoy and a very attractive girl to take out that night, so I turned right side up immediately and landed, but I had to explain why I had remained in the air for less than my scheduled appearance.

I do not know whether any undue strain was thrown on the machine by flying with that flying wire broken, but very shortly after this pageant, No. 32 Squadron having then its full complement of Grebes, my pet Snipe was transferred to the squadron then forming at Hawkinge. I flew the

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machine down and delivered it myself, and when asked by the senior Flying-Commander there how good the machine was I told him it was the best Snipe I had ever flown, whereupon he remarked that he would keep it for himself. Two weeks later, when flying at a considerable altitude, the left wing of this Snipe collapsed and the Flight-Commander was killed. No one can say to what this collapse was due, but I have often wondered, if I had retained that machine, whether I might have been the pilot in it when it crashed.

Round about this period each squadron in a fighting area had to have one flight as a " Battle Flight " each week. This flight was on duty for the whole week and would start off on Monday mornings by putting 250 rounds through each of its front guns at the butts. They might be called on at a moment's notice. We had to do three flights of at least one hour's endurance, at 20,000 feet, each week. How glad we were that we had Grebes and not Snipes, for the Grebe would get up 20,000 in about half the time that the old Snipe would take and would still be a nice machine to fly at that height, where the Snipe had had such a poor performance. But it was desperately cold at that altitude and the electrically heated clothing that we had in those days was far from being efficient, for the glove on one hand would be warm, while that on the other would be absolutely frozen. Sometimes the complete equipment would pack " in and at the end

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of our hour one was cold enough to be at the point of frost-bite. Neither had we any oxygen, but this was issued to us later.

I was in "A" Flight all the time I was in No. 32 Squadron, and was then the senior flying officer in the Flight. A new Grebe was being erected for me in the flight hangar and was almost ready for testing when I was suddenly posted to "C" Flight. The actual fact of the posting worried me very little, but the fact that such posting deprived me of my new machine worried me a lot, as this machine was not posted with me.

"Blues" Broadway was jubilant because my machine then moved to him, and the very evening of the day of my posting to "C" Flight he took the machine up on its first test flight. This test flight of his was more in the nature of an engine test and lasted only five minutes, but on landing he told me it was going to be a fine aeroplane.

The next morning he took it up and put it through its final paces.

I remember that morning very well. There was a thin cloud layer at about 800 feet, through which one could just see the blue sky above. Broadway took off and climbed through this thin layer of clouds into the blue sky above, but out of sight of us. By the note of his engine we could tell he was performing aerobatics. This went on for some minutes, until suddenly one heard a sound like the crescendo of a siren and Broadway's machine

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came hurtling towards the ground. God knows what speed he must have hit it, as there was not a particle of the machine two feet above the ground, and the engine, when dug out, was eight feet four inches under the level of the grass field in which he crashed.

At this time we were being equipped with parachutes, and Broadway tried to get out of his machine, but it was too late. He and Woodyatt, who were great friends, are buried side by side in the same little cemetery at the bottom of Whyteleaf Hill.

The Air Ministry, Air Accidents Investigation Department, discovered as the cause of this crash that the inter-aileron strut on the port side, at the top aileron, had been held in place merely by the tightness of the strut in its fitting. The three small 2 B.A. bolts and nuts had been forgotten and the strain of the aerobatics had pulled the strut from its socket, and aileron "flutter" had occurred and was followed by the crash of the machine.

These Grebes were originally rather prone to "flutter." I had an experience of "flutter" myself while flying a Grebe that we had fitted for dual instruction over the aerodrome. With a mechanic in the back seat, at a height of about 3,000 feet over the aerodrome, this uncanny "flutter" suddenly commenced. I had put the nose of the machine down and attained a speed of about 170 miles an hour, and was just going to pull the

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machine over a wide loop when suddenly the whole wing of the aeroplane started to vibrate tremendously. The actual arc of movement at the wing tips, I am sure, could not have been less than eighteen inches, and it was one of the most peculiar moments of my life. In this particular machine we had no parachutes, and I had visions of the machine falling to pieces in mid-air. I throttled my engine back and with the wings still flapping, began to glide as slowly as possible towards the ground. I was actually able to land the machine on the aerodrome, but the mechanic in the back seat must have been even more alarmed than myself, for practically as soon as the wheels touched the ground he was out of the machine and running away from it. When the machine came to rest I discovered that all my landing and flying wires and aileron control wires were so loose that I could have tied knots in them. All our Grebes were modified very soon after this.

CHAPTER IV

AN END AND A BEGINNING

In which I tell of my last few months in the Royal Air Force : how my friend Kit Denison met his death at Malta, how I could not resist doing things in an aeroplane which I was supposed not to do, how I realised that a permanent commission was out of my reach, how I made my farewell and almost by chance booked a passage to Australia.

NINETEEN 'TWENTY-SIX ! Kit Denison and I had been at school together and had learnt to fly together, and we had seen a great deal of each other during our period in the Service, but about this time he was posted to an aircraft carrier attached to Malta, and I saw nothing of him for a few months.

One evening, when I had left the station, I was going by train and tram to Croydon to eat dinner at the Greyhound Inn, where we frequently used to dine as a change from the mess. I bought an evening paper at Purley Station and boarded a tram with the paper as yet unread in my hand. We all of us at times have curious premonitions, and before I opened the paper I knew there was sad news in it for me. Kit Denison had flown into a cliff-side at Malta during a fog and had been killed. I saw his grave many years after at Valetta

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I remember Kit Denison best with his happy smile and his natural ability to make himself liked by everybody without effort. Poor old Kit !

In spite of all these tragedies, I was still full of the exuberance of youth and delighted in doing things that other people were too wise to attempt. Nothing pleased me more than flying away from my aerodrome when all other machines were on the ground owing to bad weather. I had been at Kenley so long that I prided myself on knowing every tree, high steeple and chimney in the district, and in the very worst weather backed myself to return safely to my own aerodrome. The months passed and our squadron's routine continued, with discipline on a much stricter basis. Somehow or other I was unable to curb my enthusiasm for throwing machines about, and I remember very well one afternoon when on landing, with my own commanding officer acting as my escort, I was taken up to Group Captain De La Ferte to be admonished for the breaking of some flying regulations.

At that time I used to wear a little black flying helmet which fitted perfectly round my face and was chin-strapped across under my chin, and was tied on the top of my head by tapes. Because the Grebe had rather a draughty cockpit these tapes were always tied very tightly. On the occasion of this visit to the Group Captain's office I had

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not had time to remove either my overalls or my flying helmet. Marching into the office behind my own commanding officer, I saluted and remained standing to attention. The Group Captain spoke to me alone. He started off in admonishments such as a group captain would deal out to a mere flying officer, and I saw visions of all sorts of punishments ahead. Suddenly he adopted a more fatherly tone, and I began to hope that it was all in the nature of a dressing-down without additional punishment. He told me to sit down, and I faced him across his table. He continued his talk in a very fine way, and I began to feel very contrite and unhappy. All at once I was aware that he was looking at me very curiously, and I was at once also aware of the cause of his curiosity. The chin-strap on my helmet was so tight that when I swallowed each swallow took the form of a kind of gulp, and I realised that he thought I was about to burst into tears. I was rather pleased about this, and made my gulps more frequently. I thought I had touched a soft spot in his heart, but I was suddenly disillusioned. From kindness he changed in a moment to the Group Captain again and delivered my sentence. I was to be posted to the Royal Air Force Depot, Uxbridge, for duty there for one month. This meant no flying, but in its place all days spent upon the barracks square. At that time there was nothing so distasteful in the world to a flying officer. With sorrow in my

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heart I left his office, soon after to report to the depot at Uxbridge for duty.

The Group Captain sentenced me to what was to me one month's imprisonment. However, he did not forget my sorry plight, for after ten days at the depot, all of which I hated, I suddenly received a chit to return again to my own squadron. That was a happy day, and it was like getting home again when I drove up the drive to our own Mess.

I contravened flying regulations not because I was undisciplined and had no regard for authority, but because somehow or other, when I sat in the cockpit of an aeroplane I seemed to have no control over myself and I would do all the things I was supposed not to do. It is regrettable that very soon after this I was again in trouble, but this time through sheer bad flying, when I crashed my Grebe in a most stupid way.

For some unknown reason, that afternoon I started to dive to the aerodrome surface, and at a very high speed tried to touch first one wheel and then the other, flying a few inches above the ground. I was successful on the first few occasions, and then obviously what had to happen did happen. I hit one wheel so hard that my whole under-carriage crumpled up, and, to my amazement, I saw my starboard wheel appear through the top of my bottom main plane. To add to my consternation, I saw the fire tender and the ambulance rush out towards the centre of the aerodrome to a spot

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where they thought I might crash. The impact of that last bounce had sent me well up into the air again, and, although I was flying, I had no undercarriage on which to make a successful landing. I came down and crashed as near the ambulance as possible. It was impossible, of course, to land correctly, and I turned my machine over at a fairly high speed on the aerodrome, and after crawling out found myself again under arrest. This time I was not acquitted by the court-martial that followed, but was severely reprimanded, though I lost no seniority.

I suppose it is the hope of every short-service commissioned officer to be offered a permanent commission, but I had blotted my copybook to such an extent that, despite the recommendations of my commanding officer I knew I stood no hope of obtaining a permanent commission. I had still some fifteen months' service to complete, but realising that to remain in the Service any longer was merely to prolong the agony of departure, most regretfully I wrote a letter asking permission to terminate my service. I put in my application that I proposed to return to my old profession of planting again. My application was approved, and I was to leave the Service on December 9th, 1926.

We had one fatal accident on our own aerodrome just before I left Kenley. Two officers flying a D.H. 9A crashed from a few hundred feet just by our aerodrome boundary. The point of impact

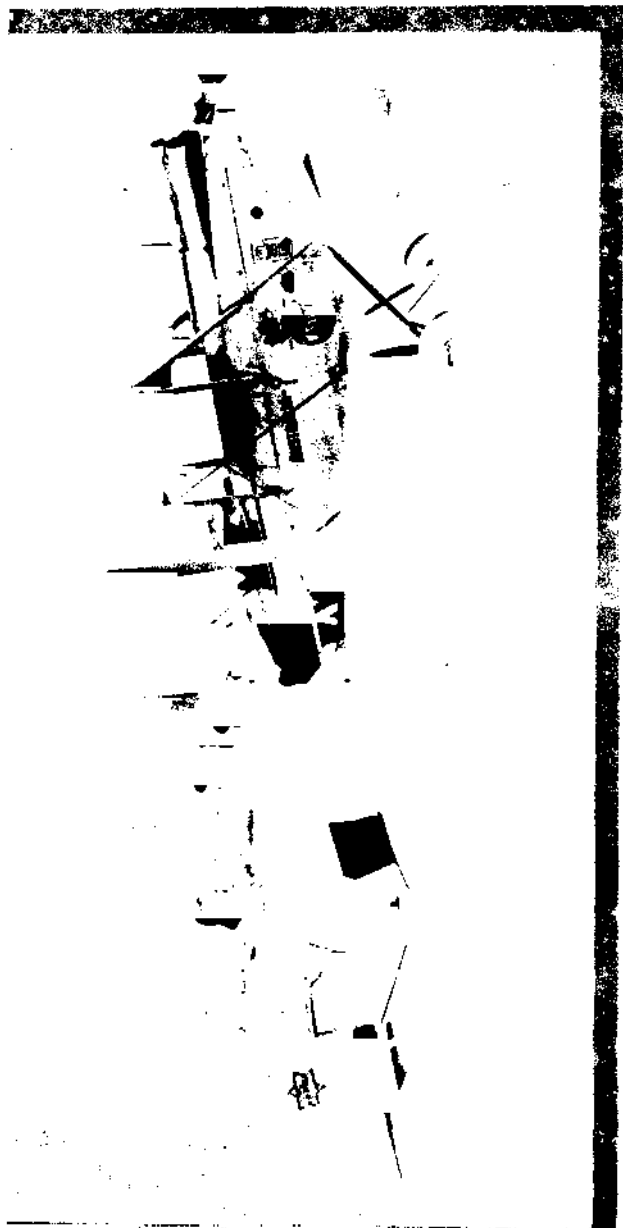
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of their machine was alongside a fairly high concrete wall, so that when the machine burst into flames it was only possible to extricate them from one side, as approach was impossible from the other owing to the wall. The sight of that unnerved us all not a little, for there is nothing so terrible as fire after a crash. My own experience later confirmed this.

My farewell "guest night" came when I was the guest of the mess where I had been a member so long. It was on this night that I made my first speech, and because I was so sincere in all I said it was a good speech. I said that I had possibly many more years to live, but I was sure that nothing would ever happen that would leave me with happier memories than those memories I would always have of my three and a half years at Kenley. This was and is very true. I had arrived at Kenley a young fledgling with little ability and little real wish to improve myself as a pilot. I left the station a fairly competent pilot, but, unfortunately, with many black marks in my copybook. I was very much older then than I had been on arrival.

My four years of service produced for me a gratuity of some £300. This was apportioned to paying off my debts, which had accumulated in some inconceivable way, to a holiday in Switzerland and a small balance put on one side as reserve.

In January, 1927, I started on my three weeks'



(Photo: L.A.N.A.)

SCOTT ARRIVING AT LYMENE AT THE END OF HIS RECORD FLIGHT FROM AUSTRALIA TO ENGLAND.

"As my wheels touched the ground I felt almost like bursting into tears. I arrived as punctually as a train."

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holiday in Switzerland in the company of Alec Montgomery, his mother and his sister. Alec was still a member of 32 Squadron and a permanent officer, and I envied him all the time. Switzerland is a grand place to forget one's worries in the clean snow and sunshine, but even in my happiest moments I could not help but remember the comparison between myself and Alec, for at the end of our stay in Switzerland he was to return to duty with 32 Squadron and I was to return to—what? England did not seem the same, for I had no fixed abode and no fixed occupation, and heaven knows I did not honestly want to go back to planting.

I put all thought of flying behind me and tried to get an appointment in the Colonial Office on the West Coast of Africa. In this I was helped very much by the splendid references from my commanding officer, flight commander, and my previous station commander, though why they should have been so generous with their recommendations I cannot think, for I must have been a source of constant worry to them all.

Nothing definite resulted from the Colonial Office, but a half promise gave me hope of an appointment in six months' time—six months was a terribly long time to wait.

One morning in March, 1927, I walked out of my father's house to fill in the morning as inclination might dictate, and although a cold morning, there seemed no possibility of rain, so I took with

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me neither overcoat nor umbrella. At eleven o'clock I was walking down the Strand when a fine drizzle suddenly turned to heavy rain. At this point I was near Australia House, and I darted in, not because of any interest in Australia or her products, but merely as an escape from the inclement weather outside. I wandered round, hoping for the rain to stop, and during my wanderings drifted into a department that was labelled "Immigration." Walking casually through, someone suddenly asked me if I thought of going to Australia, and before I had time to reply, asked me in the same breath what was my profession or occupation. I was taken so suddenly aback that I could only reply feebly that I flew aeroplanes. "Fine," said this man. "I will give you a chit to the Australian liaison officer at the Air Ministry at once," and before I had time even to tell him that I wanted neither his chit nor the Australian liaison officer he had run off to dictate and get typed the required document. This he thrust into my hand, telling me the room number at the Air Ministry and the officer's name at the same time.

I poked my nose out of Australia House to find that the rain had stopped and the sun was shining, and, having nothing better to do, trotted up Aldwych and asked at the Air Ministry for the Australian liaison officer.

To him, on my arrival at his office, I presented the chit I had got from Australia House, which

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he read. Without saying much to me he proceeded to roll down large roll maps on the wall. "Here," he said, "and here, and here are the existing air lines in Australia. Look at the width, size and the scattered population. Imagine the scope for aircraft. Imagine the need for them—the opening up of back blocks of our great Commonwealth." He left me no time at all to question or argue, but somehow or other his very enthusiasm was imparted to me, and again, almost before I knew what had happened, I held in my hand a piece of paper bearing a shipping company's address and various other instructions which I should have to attend to before I left for Australia.

I had not committed myself in any way. In fact, both at Australia House and at the Air Ministry I had scarcely had time to get a word in edgeways, but a sudden glamour for the country I had scarcely heard of filled my mind, and I thought, at least, that it would be a marvellous joke to play on my people over their luncheon table. Actually I recounted my morning's peregrination on return to lunch, and it struck me as strange that the idea was well received by my mother and father. That afternoon I booked a third-class passage to Australia. I went to the Air Ministry again the next morning and told the Australian liaison officer what I had done. He was very pleased, and said that Australia was short of pilots, and he thought I would have no difficulty in getting a job with some

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commercial air lines then operating there, "but first," he said, "you will have to get your 'B' licence."

Although most officers of any seniority at all in the R.A.F. were eligible for their commercial "B" licence, the examination had to be taken nevertheless to obtain it, but the period of time at my disposal was only fourteen days to the date of my sailing from Liverpool. I could not afford to fail in this examination, and I was suddenly obsessed with great keenness to acquire my "B" commercial licence. Although I could have probably passed without further swotting, I studied continuously and honestly fourteen hours a day in the interval I had at my disposal, and when the day for the examination came I went through it with the knowledge that I knew all and more than was required of me. I passed with flying colours (actually the only examination I had ever passed in such a way), and with my licence and my passport, and a couple of trunks, made my way to Liverpool to join the ship, outward bound for Australia.

CHAPTER V

VOYAGE TO AUSTRALIA

In which I tell of an unhappy voyage but a happy landing ; how I booked my room at the " Britannia " in Melbourne under false pretences, how I soon discovered but never regretted my mistake, how a genial policeman befriended me, and how I met for the first time Brigadier-General Blamey, Commissioner of the Victorian Police.

AT the shipping offices, when asked which port in Australia I wished to travel to, I had to confess complete ignorance of the geographical position of either Australia or her main capital cities. The shipping clerk, in view of the fact that I was merely taking a third-class passage, was solicitous, and told me that, as the difference in price of my ticket between Adelaide and Brisbane was only a matter of three pounds, I had better book to the journey's end. This I did, with the knowledge that I could disembark at Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney or Brisbane. The Australian liaison officer had given me letters of introduction to the Controller of Civil Aviation and to other prominent flying people in the Commonwealth, and as most of these addresses were in Melbourne I rather thought that port would be the place of disembarkation.

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I stayed with my sister, who was married and lived in Liverpool, for two nights previous to my departure from this country, and it was only when showing my brother-in-law my ticket and his subsequent journey with me to the shipping offices, that I discovered my third-class passage was merely a name, and that my accommodation was in reality steerage. I was rather horror-struck at this, but there was no backing out now, and I had insufficient funds at my disposal to transfer to first-class, but I do think had I known at that time the discomfort and the deplorable conditions existing on that ship in the steerage quarters, I should have changed my mind about going to Australia at all.

On the quayside before the ship sailed we were herded like a lot of cattle, and scrutinised by the ship's medical officer and port doctors. We had to put out our tongues and show our hands, and were treated in a very rough and ready way by everybody. Sensing what lay ahead of me, I told my sister, who was there to see me off, that it was bad "joss" to see anybody aboard a departing ship, and asked her to leave me, so that she need not be aware of the conditions on board the ship.

We were hurried to the gang-plank, and were peremptorily instructed by an official to find our own quarters, and make our own arrangements as to the disposal of our baggage.

Voyage to Australia

My passage had certainly only cost me £43, but I discovered afterwards that I and a mere handful of others were the only people amongst the five hundred steerage passengers who had bought their passage at all. The rest all came under a Government quota. I do not complain about this at all, for even if conditions were bad for me aboard that ship, they were equally bad for the rest of us. Even people who had not been used to the moderate standard of living that I had been accustomed to, were aghast at the prospect of the conditions that they would have to endure on that long voyage to Australia.

My lot was certainly better than that of some, for I shared a cabin of sorts with one other person who was travelling to Cape Town, but many of the others were herded together, twelve and more between each partition, right down in the lower decks in the bowels of the ship. There was one small recreation room for five hundred of us, and the baths worked out at about one every fifty people. The food was so disgusting that it was only sheer hunger that made one eat it. I know I would have been definitely hungry on many occasions had I not, by virtue of my small purse, been able to make friends with the ship's storeman, and descended with him late at night to the ship's storeroom to eat tinned food and ship's biscuit.

For the first five days to Teneriffe, during which

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time we encountered bad weather, our section of the ship was frankly disgusting. These poor people, unused to sea travel, were being seasick all over the place. Small children, denied their parent's protection owing to their seasickness, swarmed about everywhere. Our dining saloon, situated above the propellers in the stern of the ship, would echo with the throbs and vibrations of the screws as the stern lifted in the air. This, coupled with the bad food and the general nausea of the entire atmosphere, produced a disgusting spectacle. I remember that at the end of each table there was a large tin bowl in which our plates were washed at the end of each so-called "course," and were handed back to us, often wet and uncleansed, for any course that might follow.

It seems strange that conditions such as that could have existed in 1927, for to-day, even for such a moderate sum as £43, there are shipping lines to and from Australia which give one an extremely comfortable passage.

On this trip of mine seven years ago I tried to make myself pleasant to my other companions in distress, but somehow or other they rather doubted me, and looked upon me as something different from themselves, in spite of my attitude of friendliness. In my letters home, posted from Teneriffe, I wrote to my people of the conditions in the ship, and though not wishing to bemoan my lot, I must

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have written rather drastically about the situation, for when our ship arrived in Cape Town after a terribly slow voyage of some twenty-four days from Liverpool, I was informed that authority had been received that I should transfer to the first-class. This I refused, as I did not like to be thought unequal to sharing the discomforts that other people had to endure.

I recall vividly my day's tour in Cape Town, for docking at about seven in the morning, I got into a taxicab and drove to the best hotel in Cape Town and ate the first decent meal for many days. What luxury real clean plates and silver seemed, and how nice it was to be able to get a fresh-water bath. I spent that day in Cape Town dreading the time I should have to board the ship again. I went round to Camp's Bay and swam in the swimming baths there and drove out along that marvellous road towards the Cape of Good Hope.

Our voyage from Cape Town to Albany, Western Australia, was another three weeks of acute discomfort.

Ships journeying across the southern portion of the Indian Ocean, from west to east, go as far south as 40, and for the greater part of our run to Australia we were in the regions of the "roaring forties." For several days no one was allowed on deck at all because giant waves would break over the poop and flood our deck to a height of several

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feet. The atmosphere of the low decks was stifling, though we were not a little cold.

I remember we went up Albany Sound in Western Australia and anchored at the wharf there on His Majesty King George V's birthday. This was my first contact with the great country of Australia. What fun it was to get on shore again to stretch our legs, and to know that our long voyage was nearing its end. We left the same day for Adelaide, and I had made up my mind that I would leave the ship there and travel overland to Melbourne.

Adelaide is a fine city. They call it "the city of churches," and like all Australian cities it is splendidly clean, with fine wide streets and clean-looking houses. The Australians, I soon found, were grand people. The same evening of our arrival in Adelaide, I got the train to Melbourne, and arrived in Melbourne at Spencer Street Station at nine o'clock on the Sunday morning. I had brought with me just one suit-case. The rest of my luggage was still on the ship.

Australian cities, normally so alive on six days of the week, are a very different spectacle on the Sabbath morning. My first impression of Melbourne was a shock to me, for on leaving the train in the railway station I stepped out into a drizzle of rain to discover an atmosphere of quiet and stillness. There were no newspapers, there were no trams, there were no buses. There was

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scarcely a soul to be seen, and there was absolute quietness everywhere. Though not knowing Melbourne, I knew of the best hotels, which my slender purse forbade me to use. I left my suit-case, which I had brought from Adelaide, in the station cloak-room, and set out on foot to discover some place where I might live. It is not an easy task to find a suitable, comfortable and moderate hotel in any strange town, but this was my task on that Sunday morning in June, 1927.

I walked up broad streets and down broad streets, far wider than our Regent Street of London, but all the hotels in these localities were obviously beyond my means. The most important thing in a strange country when one has no fixed occupation and no friends, is to husband the small resources that one has, and my object was to find a cheap place of residence. At the corner of Swanston and Lonsdale Streets I saw a tiny hotel that looked rather like one of our small English public-houses. It was called the "Britannia," and I thought the name augured well. I marched in and asked if they could put me up. Their reply was rather alarming. They asked me if I was a "professional," and I was not sure what this meant. But thinking it over rapidly in my mind, I thought: "Professional, profession, yes, aviation is a profession," and I answered "Yes." The terms there were three guineas a week, which was very

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suitable to me. I told the lady, Mrs. Shea, that I would go to Spencer Street and collect my bag, and walking back to the station I collected my suit-case and drove in a taxi to my new home.

On arrival there with my baggage I was shown a charming and very clean little room and then, escorted by Mrs. Shea, was taken to the small drawing-room to meet some of the other guests. It was with consternation on entering this room that I discovered that all the guests were girls—most attractive—and none of them seemed more than about twenty-five years old. I was rather embarrassed, because a strange country always has strange customs, and I knew that I was an object of interest, as much for my nationality as anything else. English people who visit Australia for the first time notice immediately the Australian accent, and naturally this works conversely. The English accent is very outstanding in Australia.

These girls were very charming and made me feel very happy almost immediately, and then questioned me about my movements, and asked "what show" I was in. It was only then that I understood Mrs. Shea's question, "Was I a professional?" These girls were all in the show business, and I had confessed to Mrs. Shea that I was also. On discovering this I immediately sought out Mrs. Shea again, and confessed that I was not a "professional" in the sense she

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meant and that I had misunderstood her question. She was terribly nice though, and laughed heartily at my embarrassment, and said that I could consider myself a professional as regards the terms in her hotel.

A stranger is not a stranger for very long in Australia. The Australians have a happy knack and an aptitude for making people feel at home. They are the most generous of all people I have ever encountered, and they will do everything they can to help a stranger in their midst. To Mrs. Shea and the girls of the "Rose Marie" chorus, which show was then running in Melbourne, I owe a lot of thanks. Though I have never been able to repay them, it always affords me intense pleasure when I think of their attitude to me.

My first object on the Monday morning was to find employment for myself, and I started to do this by making myself known at the Civil Aviation Headquarters. The Director of Civil Aviation at that time was Colonel Brinsmead, who was kindness itself and furnished me with a list of addresses of people to whom I should write.

I had other letters of introduction, and I selected one of these, from a great friend of mine in England to his agent in Melbourne. This letter I naturally delivered personally, and was shown into this gentleman's office. The time was then about noon, and after reading the letter he asked me to call back at one o'clock and he would take me out to

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lunch. I called for him about an hour later, and he took me to lunch, not to his club or a hotel or good-type restaurant, but to a little eating-house run by a Greek. This I thought was rather strange, but imagined that I was unused to the customs of the country. We had a hearty lunch, but not a very entertaining one, and when luncheon was over he suddenly asked me point-blank whether five pounds would be enough to help me on. At first I did not quite understand the gist of his conversation, and then suddenly realised that he thought I was a "remittance man" in need of assistance.

In the years of my stay in Australia I discovered with shame that many of my fellow-countrymen belonged to that denomination, and that they are a pest and a nuisance, and a financial drag on so many business people in the capital cities of the Commonwealth.

English people as a whole have not, unfortunately, made a good impression on the Commonwealth. This is due, I think, in the first place to the poor type of emigrant we send to our colonies, and in the second place to the rather bombastic attitude of our so-called better type of visitor.

My first real friend of the male species in Australia was a policeman. I met him in rather an extraordinary way in 1927. In Melbourne jay-walking was prohibited—it has since been banned

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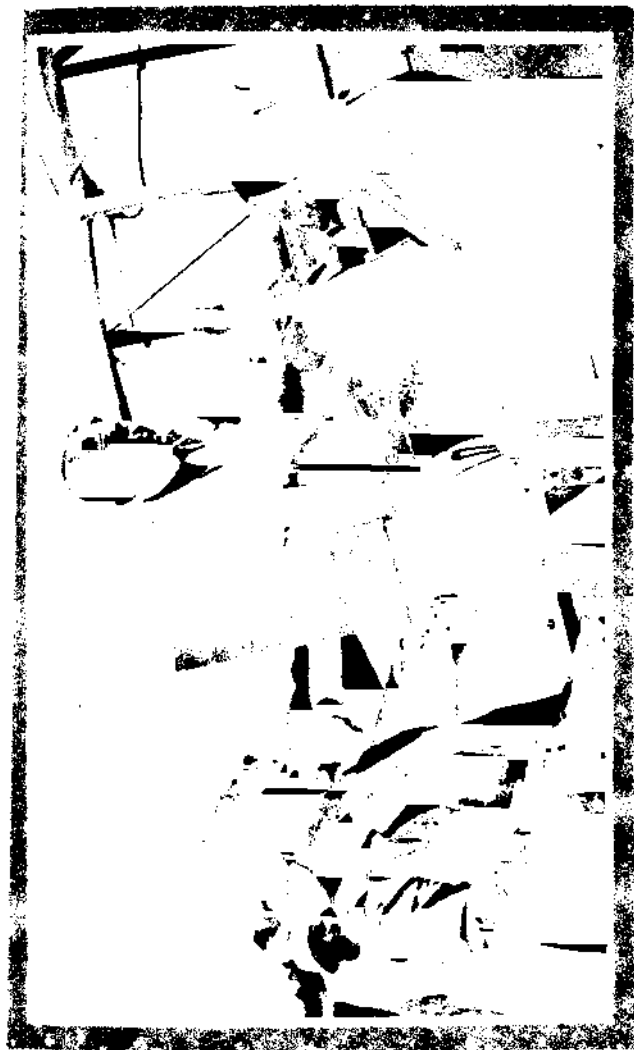
in London—and pedestrians had to cross at street corners in the space allotted them. One morning I walked diagonally across a street intersection and was pulled up immediately by a policeman on point duty and asked, "Why the so-and-so I was jay-walking?" My confession of ignorance of this manoeuvre, and my admission that I had only been in the city a couple of days, caused him quite a lot of amusement, and our conversation held the traffic up a little longer than was normal, but in that time we had arranged a rendezvous at my hotel at five o'clock the same evening.

He came along at the appointed hour, which was the first of many meetings. He was a great fellow, and took me under his wing and showed me all the good cheap eating-houses where one could eat good food at little cost.

One evening there was to be a policeman's party at a restaurant in the Victoria Gardens. He insisted that I should go along as his guest. Unfortunately we arrived a little late, and instead of finding seats at the foot of the table, there were only two seats left at the head table directly opposite the Commissioner of the Victoria Police. My policeman friend obviously did not want to sit anywhere near the Commissioner, but as the Commissioner meant nothing to me I propelled my policeman to the high table, and met for the first time Brigadier-General Blamey, Commissioner of the Victorian Police. He did not know me, of

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course, but that made no difference to his attitude, and I thoroughly enjoyed my dinner and the concert afterwards. It is rather curious that four years after this particular event Brigadier Blamey was the host at a party given in my honour.



[Photo: L.N.J.]

SCOTT WITH HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AFTER HIS RECORD TRIP FROM AUSTRALIA TO ENGLAND.

"I owe thanks to so many people, but to my father for his amazing sympathy and help at all times
I owe most."

CHAPTER VI

COMMERCIAL PILOT

In which I tell of my routine work with the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Service, Ltd : how I became " The Honourable Charles Scott " for a time, how I came to Charleville with only a few shillings to spare, how I worked on the Longreach-Cloncurry-Camooweal section of our route and came to know " Doolie," the most popular girl in the north-west of Queensland and the south-east of the Northern Territory.

FOR five days I wondered whether my resources would cover the period of idleness before I found occupation, and I was on the point of accepting (or rather seriously considering) a job to demonstrate some cockroach killer, when fortunately I received a telegram to meet a certain Mr. MacMaster at the Windsor Hotel at the top of Collins Street, who wished to interview me with regard to a flying job somewhere in Queensland. With a curious thrill I walked to keep my appointment, and over lunch was asked if I would sign a contract for a year to fly for the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services, Ltd., at a retaining fee of £500 a year and bonuses. This was far more than I had ever hoped or dared anticipate. By the time the old ship reached Melbourne from Adelaide I was in the possession

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of a definite job. This was about the end of June, and my appointment was to commence on the first of August.

My company, known as "Quantas," wanted me to take a refresher course in flying, and arranged that in the month's interval before I joined them I should do some flying at the Royal Australian Air Force Station at Point Cook, and I reported to the commanding officer there.

As I was a civilian I stayed at a little hotel in the small town of Werribee, a few miles away from the aerodrome, and walked or got a lift to the aerodrome each morning.

My first impression of Point Cook was the contrast between the Australian Air Force and the Air Force in England, which I had so recently left. There seemed to be an absolute lack of distinction between commissioned ranks and the troops. It seemed quite ordinary for a rigger or a fitter to slouch up to an officer with a cigarette in his mouth and call the officer by his Christian name. Frankly, I was shocked at this, but discovered that, in spite of the obvious and general camaraderie that existed between officers and men, good discipline was maintained. "Jack is as good as his master" is perhaps a slogan typical of Australian working units.

I spent my few hours of refresher flying on old Clerget Avros. The most modern machines that the R.A.A.F. had at that time were 2D.H.9A's

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and half a dozen or so S.E.5's, this latter a machine that was out-of-date before our own obsolete Snipes came into being. In my own days in the Service I had always heard the S.E.5 spoken of very highly, and it was with great glee that I was permitted to fly one of these and test for myself its capabilities. What a lovely little aeroplane it was, and I still maintain that none of our present-day aeroplanes are quite so delightful to fly as those of the War-time era.

There were two outstanding incidents that I remember during my stay at the Bridge Hotel, Werribee. The first was an overcrowded luncheon room and a waiter asking me if I would object to somebody else sharing my private table. Naturally, of course, I did not mind, and was frankly rather pleased to have someone to talk to. The man who sat himself down opposite me was a typical Australian, by his speech and the cut of his clothes. We talked of this and that, and I learnt that he was going to Geelong, to the race-meeting there. Werribee was the half-way house between Melbourne and this place. We had coffee together, we shook hands and he left. During the course of our luncheon I had been conscious of the fact that everybody had been looking in our direction, so after his departure I asked the waiter the identity of my late companion. The waiter smiled rather wickedly and said, " Oh, that was Squizzy Taylor ! " Squizzy Taylor was the Al Capone or the Jack

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Diamond or the John Dillinger of Melbourne. Even at that time he was reported to have more than two notches on his gun barrel, but there was no proof to bring a conviction. It was only a few months after this luncheon that Squizzy Taylor himself was shot down in the streets of Melbourne.

The other incident that I remember still amuses me and bears out the fact that no matter how democratic a people may be they still have a great regard for title and aristocracy.

One of my girl friends from the "Rose Marie" chorus in Melbourne, when writing me a letter to ask how I was getting on, addressed the letter to "The Honourable Charles Scott." I, not expecting any mail, had overlooked the letter-rack in the hotel, so that this letter was in the rack for several days before I was aware of its existence. During these days it was the object of interest to many. Obviously I treated the matter as a joke, and said nothing about it until one day the proprietor of the hotel asked me into his own sitting-room to meet a few of his friends. He introduced me as the Honourable Charles Scott, and I, thinking this was merely a joke on his part, accepted the title with a laugh. It was with great consternation that I realised very soon how seriously it had been taken by the others, and because of their seriousness I frankly did not dare to disillusion them. They all laughed and, prodding me in the ribs, said I

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had been travelling incognito, and when I denied this observed that I was a "wise one." They poured drinks all over me, and somehow or other their generosity alarmed me, so that for the rest of my stay at Werribee, through the girlish impulse of my friend, I remained "The Honourable Charles Scott."

I returned to Melbourne a week before I was due to leave for Queensland. We here in England cannot appreciate the value of distance. We go from Euston to Liverpool and imagine we are undertaking a journey of tremendous importance, that distance being a mere 200 miles. The Australian, on the other hand, journeys from Melbourne to Brisbane, a journey of four days in a ship, and thinks nothing of it. Because of the casual way in which my trip to Queensland was accepted, somehow or other I had overlooked the distance there myself, and it was with grave anxiety that I found my ticket to Queensland was to absorb nearly all my remaining capital, particularly as Brisbane itself was still 600 miles short of my ultimate destination. I think I had just five pounds left, after purchasing my ticket for Brisbane, when I boarded my ship in Melbourne after having settled all my accounts, and I knew that I would have to be very careful of every sixpence that was spent. For this reason I saw very little of Sydney during the day and night we spent there *en voyage* to Brisbane itself, but I remember, in spite of my poverty, how thrilled

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I was at the spectacle of Sydney Harbour. The New South Welshmen are accused by the Victorians of having three great possessions: "Our 'arbour, our bridge, and our Bradman." The harbour was there as it has been since the days of Cook. The bridge was in the process of being built, and Bradman at that time was merely the embryo of the great star he was to become. There is one thing that I remember and will always like about Melbourne, namely, the Botanical Gardens in the Victoria Park, which I consider are the finest I have ever seen, and I shall always remember Sydney for the glory of her harbour. This harbour, capable of housing the navies of the world, is one of God's masterpieces of beauty. Hidden coves and inlets are everywhere and the entrance, two massive cliffs of rock, is as fitting an entrance as the great Sydney Harbour Bridge to-day is its end. On this visit and because of my financial poverty I discovered none of the fine hotels which Sydney possesses, nor was I able to delve as far as the bathing beaches, of which Sydney is so justly proud.

Brisbane is reached by the rounding of Cape Moreton, the passage across Moreton Bay and the entrance to the Brisbane River. When we tied up at the dock-side in Brisbane I had still 500 odd miles to travel and three pounds only left for my fare and a night's lodging in Brisbane. My fare to Charleville, where I was to pick up the aeroplane

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running over the Cloncurry route was, if I remember rightly, two pounds ten shillings and sixpence. My night's lodging with breakfast was six shillings, so that I had just a few shillings to cover incidental expenses. That journey to Charleville was one of the most uncomfortable train journeys I can remember, for the heat was oppressive and I was travelling second-class in a very overcrowded compartment, and when night came (the journey to Charleville takes eighteen hours) I had no money to buy a sleeper, so that it was a very dishevelled and hungry me that was welcomed at the station in Charleville by the pilot of the southern section of our mail run. I told him at once of my financial predicament and he roared with laughter, and said that that was the best way to finish a holiday and start a new job; but I had certainly cut it very fine, and the ten pounds which this pilot immediately lent me was more than welcome. We spent one night in Charleville, I remember, and flew north to Longreach, which was then the Qantas headquarters, on the following morning just after daybreak.

During my train journey from Brisbane to Charleville I had been keenly interested in the country through which we passed, for I had heard that Queensland was a marvellous country for aeroplanes. But during the length of that train journey I had been sadly disillusioned as to my opinion of its suitability, for everywhere that I could see was

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scrub and timber, and though the country seemed very flat, there were none of the rolling pasture lands that I had imagined.

Leaving the aerodrome at Charleville that morning, as far as I could see from the cabin of the machine—for I was travelling as passenger on this occasion—the country was all timber, but after flying a matter of only thirty miles the timber gave place to the open down country so typical of Western Queensland.

Though the country is featureless and uninteresting it certainly is the paradise of aeroplanes. There are no mountains, and there are blue skies always. The clouds are so rare that they are hailed with thankfulness as a shield from the sun.

Our route in 1927 was from Charleville to Longreach, by way of Tambo and Blackall, from Longreach to Cloncurry via Winton and MacKinley and on to Camooweal by way of Mount Isa. We arrived at Longreach on this day, and I was met on the aerodrome by Hudson Fysh, our company's managing director. He drove me from the aerodrome to our head office, where he introduced me to the staff and pilots, took me to the club, and then to the hotel which all we pilots used. Longreach is the capital of the sheep district of Western Queensland. From the air it resembles a dump of empty kerosine tins flashing in the sun, for all the houses are wooden, with corrugated iron roofs. The streets are wide, but there are no trees

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anywhere, and the hot sun beats down mercilessly on the brown natural roads. In wet weather all roads are impassable, and until the sun dries the ground, surface transport is at a standstill. That was where we with our aeroplanes held the advantage.

The first week of my sojourn in Longreach was spent in practising flying in the type of aeroplane I was to fly with the company. Our fleet at that time consisted of four D.H.50's, which was a four-passenger machine with an old Armstrong Siddeley Puma engine of 240 h.p., an old D.H.9C with the same type of engine, and an obsolete D.H.4 of war-time vintage. I flew the D.H.4 first, then the 9C, and afterwards the 50's, doing my full load tests with all three. Next I flew as passenger along the entire length of our route, to become familiar with the system of mails and parcels and agents at each aerodrome.

I was eventually allocated to the Longreach-Cloncurry-Camooweal section, a total mileage of 557 miles. This section I would fly in the following manner: I would leave Longreach on a Thursday afternoon and arrive at Cloncurry, 311 miles away, that evening. The following morning at daybreak I would fly 248 miles to Camooweal. The next day I would fly back to Cloncurry, and on the Sunday morning from Cloncurry to Longreach.

Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays were my

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own, and were quite the most tedious part of the week, for there was *absolutely nothing to do* in Longreach except to play billiards at the club.

The life of an air-mail pilot becomes rather tedious after the first few months of operation, for he flies continually over the same route, which, having been flown many times, loses any picturesque interest that it might have had at the beginning. In Europe, of course, different weather conditions make the air-mail pilot's task more interesting and varied, but in 1927, in Queensland, we had nothing but blue skies and an absolute absence of rain. The whole of the western district of Queensland was suffering from drought. There had been no real rain for three years, and the country which, I was assured, in wet weather was green and beautiful, at this time was brown and devoid of any grass whatsoever. The river beds were dry and the only green visible was the dark green foliage of the Coollibah trees on the river banks. Somehow or other these trees seemed to flourish without rain.

Our freights would consist of various parcels, which would travel from Brisbane to Charleville by train, and then be taken aboard our aeroplanes for distribution along the route. Each town also had its little mail-bag, and we had a sprinkling of passengers. You never ran empty, but it was a rare circumstance to run fully loaded over our entire section. Passengers are peculiar people.

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Having flown with you once, they swear that they will fly with no one else. *Their confidence is certainly gratifying but very amusing too.*

Towards the end of 1927 we opened up another 240 miles of air route to a place called Normanton, on the Gulf of Carpentaria, from Cloncurry. This little town had once been prosperous and thriving during the gold rush of the late years of the last century, but had now dwindled to a mere hundred or so inhabitants. The Commonwealth Government had taken pity on their isolation, and had increased our air subsidy so that we might embrace Normanton in our itinerary.

We of Quantas could claim to the founding of a new industry in Normanton. In the Norman River itself there were masses of very fine fish, particularly the barramundi, this fine fish often weighing as much as 200 pounds. There was no ice nor any good system of cooling in Normanton, so that any fish taken from the river had to be consumed by the local inhabitants, but with the advent of our aeroplanes fish would be caught on Friday night and loaded into our aeroplanes before sunrise on the Saturday morning. We would often carry as much as 800 pounds of fish, the amount, of course, varying according to the number of passengers and first-class freight and mail matter that we carried. This fish would be landed in Cloncurry by about half-past eight in the morning, at any rate at such time to prevent the sun's heat

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having any bad influence on it. At Cloncurry it would be rushed to the ice store and then distributed to whosoever wished to purchase it. As fresh fish is an absolutely unknown quantity in Western Queensland, this industry that we promoted was good for us, and much appreciated by the people of Cloncurry and Western Queensland districts. For my own part I hated the Normanton section, as I never took kindly to the idea that a pilot should act as fishmonger and porter, as well as fly his aeroplane, for no matter how fresh the fish were, there was a definite fishy atmosphere pervading the aeroplane.

I remember one morning, when I was flying my machine from Normanton, that I had one solitary passenger in the cabin. He, poor fellow, shared the odour of the fish; the pilot being out in the fresh air hardly sensed it. This passenger was dozing in the cabin when all at once I noticed through the little connecting hatch between my cockpit and the cabin, one of these great barramundi suddenly start to kick, as fish supposed dead will often do. He kicked so violently—this great chap—that he kicked himself out of the big fish-basket right into the lap of the sleeping passenger, who awoke with a start and a scream of terror! I have often tried to imagine what my own waking thoughts would have been had I waked to discover a large barramundi of two hundred pounds sitting in my lap.

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Of all the places along our route I liked Camooweal the best. Camooweal was over two hundred miles from a railhead, and the town itself boasted one hotel, a post office and a general store, and its inhabitants, though I never actually counted them, would have been certainly less than one hundred. Camooweal, however, is printed large on the map, for it is the final outpost of civilisation before the great barren spaces of Australia's Northern Territory.

To Camooweal, *en route* from all the cities of the South, came the stockmen, the drovers, the boundary riders, and the managers of the cattle stations of the Northern Territory. The hotel where we would stay overnight was run and owned by a man called Reilly, who had one son and six daughters. Of the daughters, the most attractive to me was Doolie. I never knew her real name, but she always impressed me because even in that outlandish and isolated town, she was always so smart and so attractive. One never saw Doolie divorced from her powder-puff or lipstick, and she only neglected to wear stockings during the very hot months of the summer. She would wait at table in the coffee-room and dining-room of the hotel, there being a subtle social distinction between these two. I think one can say without reservation that Doolie was the most popular girl in the north-west of Queensland and the south-east of the Northern Territory, but her popularity was due not

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to the fact that she had little competition, but to her absolute charm and genial friendly spirit. Doolie would have been about seventeen years old when I first knew her, which would make her twenty-four to-day, but as long as I, or anyone else, ever knew her, such feminine traits as love never entered her mind. I suppose she is what one would almost term a happy child of nature.

All surface transport to Camooweal was by motor-truck or camel. I wonder how many people realise that the camel is one of Australia's most certain means of transport in the interior. I have seen caravans of twenty or more camels under marching orders in central Australia, and always commanded by an Afghan. In wet weather, of course, the motor lorry was useless, and often places like Camooweal would be without outside communication for many weeks. At such times our aeroplanes were of great value from the point of view of transporting persons from one place to another, for only the aeroplanes could operate when the roads were impassable. There were occasions when our aerodromes became so bogged that taking off and landing were hazardous propositions, for although the drought was general, violent storms would often render small sections of the country impassable. If such a storm happened to be over one of our own aerodromes

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an afternoon's rain would make it unfit for use.

Up and down this mail route once a week for months—that was my routine, and I was getting heartily sick of it.

CHAPTER VII

A GREAT AIRMAN AND SOME DISTINGUISHED PASSENGERS

In which I tell of the arrival of Bertie Hinkler at Camooweal on his famous England-Australia flight. how I set out to look for him when he was long overdue, and how he arrived safely. I also tell of some taxi work that fell to my lot : how politics and petrol were the reasons for my first two journeys, how His Excellency the Governor-General of Australia was my passenger for the third and Air-Marshal Sir John Salmond for the fourth.

EARLY in 1928 there was an event in Australia that echoed throughout the world. A little man called Bertie Hinkler astonished and amazed us all by flying a tiny aeroplane, all alone, from London to Australia. Nothing could be more fitting than the fact that he was an Australian, and his own simple explanation of his deed that he was merely flying home to see his people, gave his exploit a significance that no other record flight has somehow ever achieved. I was fortunate in knowing all the aerial pioneers of the flying route to Australia—Hinkler, Amy Johnson, Kingsford Smith—and I met and knew them all in that order.

The barren open spaces of the North-west of



Photo: Sport and General..

A ROUSING RECEPTION AT ARCHERFIELD AERODROME, BRISBANE, AFTER REGAINING THE ENGLAND-AUSTRALIA RECORD.

"It must be confessed that I enjoyed it all, but at the same time was longing for a bath and rest and quietness."

Some Distinguished Passengers

Australia were known only to me by repute. Their reputation gave them an unhealthy atmosphere. It was generally considered that they were devoid of water or game, or any of the necessities for supporting life. Once a man or a beast had wandered away from the set track across these desolate wastes, there was supposed to be no hope for them. In hot weather, such as was experienced in that part of Australia, human beings could not live for more than forty-eight hours without water.

When Hinkler landed in Australia at Port Darwin, he rested for a day and then set off to fly to Camooweal, where, by a coincidence, he was expected on the evening of the night I was to spend there in the course of my routine work. From Port Darwin the route is across the unfriendly district of the Northern Territory, and when Hinkler, who had mastered the navigation of the route from England to Port Darwin, failed to turn up in Camooweal at his appointed hour, anxiety was obviously very acute. Communications were so bad, if not absolutely non-existent, that no one had seen or heard his machine, and the next morning, when I was due to leave at daybreak with the mails, I postponed my departure on my own initiative in case my aeroplane were needed for a search. I was able to get into touch with my head office at Longreach by wireless telegram, requesting permission to use the mail plane for search purposes

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if Hinkler had not put in an appearance by noon ; and by noon, with my machine loaded to capacity with fuel, water, and two men who claimed to know the Northern Territory well, we set off in search.

I could only assume that Hinkler was lost somewhere on the truck route between Camooweal and Port Darwin, and this was the route I searched. After flying 200 miles out I landed at a station and asked if they had had any news. They had had none, so I flew back towards Camooweal, keeping parallel to cut fifty miles off the route Hinkler should have followed. When we arrived back in Camooweal after an unsuccessful search, I was overjoyed to find Hinkler had landed there safely, very soon actually after I had left in search of him. This was the first time I met that great little man. He was most effusive in his thanks at my humble efforts, but, after all, who would not have searched, even if it had not been Hinkler who was lost ?

There was a great party in Camooweal that night, when the entire population sat down to a feast in honour of Hinkler. The beer bottles were arranged daintily and in profusion on the tables, and when you consider that a bottle of beer in Camooweal costs six shillings, I suppose the cost of that dinner could not have been less than the price of an equivalent banquet in some fashionable West End hotel. I acted as escort for

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Hinkler the following day when we flew to Cloncurry and Longreach. Everywhere we landed there were cheering crowds; without a doubt, Hinkler was the man of the moment in all Australia.

I remember so well at Winton that I flew on and landed some five minutes ahead, because I had mail to clear and parcels to deliver to our agent. Most of the people on the aerodrome recognised both me and my mail plane, but there were two old bushwhacker drunks, who darted away from the crowd, and as I stepped out of my aeroplane, tried to hoist me on to their shoulders. They continued smacking me on my back—they were too drunk to lift me—and repeating all the time, "Austroiylia is praud of you," would not let me get a word in edgeways. Suddenly Bertie's machine came flying low over the aerodrome fence. "Who is this?" they asked. "That's Hinkler," I replied. "Then who the ——— are you?" they demanded. It was the first time I had been taken for a national hero!

All the world knows of Hinkler's triumphal progress through Australia and his subsequent meritorious flights before he met his sad end in the mountains of Italy at the beginning of last year. There is no doubt that Hinkler's long flight to Australia made people more air-minded than they were before.

Our mail route flying was often tempered with taxi trips, when private individuals would want a

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machine to fly them on their private business. One such taxi trip fell to me when the prospective candidate for the State Division of Longreach made an aerial trip to canvass his supporters. The Longreach constituency was many square miles in area and mostly inclined to Labour. The candidate I was flying was the Country Party nominee. I remember one meeting he held in a little town where he started to harangue his opponent in a perfectly parliamentary way, but he was unwise enough to call the attention of the crowd to two drunken hecklers in their midst, and more unwise still to suggest verbally to these two hecklers that they were unsober. They immediately thirsted for his blood. My passenger, the Country Party representative, immediately turned to me, who had been listening to his speech, and said : " Whatever you do, don't leave me," and I replied : " I am terribly sorry, but I have been hired in the capacity of pilot and not as bodyguard, and I will now leave you to fight your own battle." I could see no point whatever in being involved in a heated political dispute. I have said that the tasks of pilots were many and varied.

Another trip that I undertook soon after this was flying a representative of a petrol firm through the back blocks of Western Queensland, as far west as the border line of South Australia. His was really a goodwill tour on behalf of his company, and obviously his company's products were

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carried in our fuel tanks. There are two opposition companies in Australia. At each homestead we visited I would pick out a piece of land that I considered suitable and, landing on it, we would make ourselves charming to the people there. If we wanted more petrol we would ask for it and leave a credit note in exchange. Such a system was quite usual, but always, of course, we filled our tanks with the products of the company which my passenger represented.

One night we landed in a most out-of-the-way part of south-western Queensland. The country was all rock and quite unfit for landing, but I was able to pull off a landing using the two wheel ruts of a road. I had at that time five gallons of spirit left in my tank, but was positive I should be able to uplift some petrol from that station.

In the morning I asked the station manager if he had some petrol for me, and he said certainly he had, but unfortunately there was only petrol of the opposition company, which my passenger refused to have in the tank. I explained to him that as our next point of call was seventy miles away we were cutting it very fine, if we did not want to force-land through lack of fuel, but he insisted that we should take a chance, so we set off over the seventy miles of desert between these two stations in the hope of getting the right brand of spirit at the next place.

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The situation of the station to which we were flying was ten miles on the South Australian side of the Border fence, and my method of approach to it was to find the Border fence at a point to the southward of it, and then fly northward to the station itself. I adopted this means of being certain of my whereabouts at all times in case of shortage of petrol. After three-quarters of an hour's flying with the petrol gauge getting down towards the empty " mark, we came to a fence that seemed to stretch to infinity on either side of us. I passed a chit to my passenger with the query: " Surely this is the Border fence ? " His reply was: " No, all Border fences are double." That means, of course, that there is a small piece of neutral territory between each fence. I imagined that my passenger knew more of the geography and the Border fences of Australia than I did, and I therefore continued flying in a westerly direction, but with the growing conviction, as my petrol gauge descended still lower, that it was actually the Border fence we had passed. Suddenly, on the desert below us, I saw a camel team, and without even asking my passenger's permission I throttled back and landed beside them. " Have you any petrol ? " I asked the drover. " Yes, tons of it," he replied. " What petrol is it ? " asked my passenger, and the reply was that it was again our opposition petrol. This time there was no alternative but to use the opposition company's products. I firmly believe that

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my passenger would have been happier marching to procure his own petrol than accepting that of the opposition firm, but I disliked walking at any time, and one good spirit is as good as another to me always.

The next long taxi trip that I had was flying His Excellency the Governor-General of Australia from Charleville up to Newcastle Waters, down the Overland Telegraph Line through Central Australia to Alice Springs, and on to the rail-head at Oodnadatta, where His Excellency could board his private train, and I would make my way back to Longreach.

Somehow or other there is always a feeling of anxiety when one has important personages in one's aeroplane, particularly in this case, as His Excellency was the most important person in Australia, and knew a great deal about flying.

I was given a brand new machine for this long taxi trip, and because we were flying for long stretches over unpopulated districts, I insisted on having a good type of compass in the machine. Our ordinary mail planes were fitted with an old obsolete type, which was all that was necessary along the route we knew so well. This particular compass had a horizontal card and could only be fitted in the machine on the floor, just forward of the control column.

His Excellency proved a most amiable passenger. We spent the first night at Cloncurry and the

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next day we flew out to Camooweal, from which point I was to fly over what was, to me, unknown territory.

The fact that Hinkler had lost himself in the Northern Territory gave me anxiety as to whether I should be able to navigate over it myself, and after leaving Camooweal, and flying for nearly two hours, I suddenly realised that I *was* lost. I could not confess this to His Excellency, and continued in a straight line, hoping for the best. My relief was tremendous when, in the midst of this isolation, I saw a group of houses and knew it was a cattle station (but I could not tell which cattle station it was). I was taking no chances, so I sent a chit to His Excellency asking him whether he would like a cup of tea, and without waiting for his reply, in case this should be negative, I throttled down and landed. Without waiting for him I rushed up to the first person who came to greet us, and whispered quickly: "Tell me where I am," and, having received the reply that I was at Allroy Downs, I returned to His Excellency and said, quite in a matter-of-fact way, that we were at Allroy and that the station manager would be very honoured to give us tea. I know the station manager was very pleased with our visit, and I am sure His Excellency did not object to a break in the journey either, and I, finally ascertaining my exact position, was very much more happy than I had been a few minutes before. I

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got my directions in secrecy and off we went to Brunette Downs, where we spent the night.

All these big cattle stations of the Northern Territory, though consisting only of half a dozen sheds and houses, are in themselves virtual homes and self-supporting towns. They can exist without communication from the outside world for a month at a time, which is as well, for in the case of this particular station the nearest railway-head was close on 500 miles away. Brunette Downs had its own wireless station, so that although it was isolated from the rest of the world by actual ground transport, it was nevertheless in communication and *au fait* with world events. All these big cattle stations have a selected piece of land which may be used as an aerodrome, for all of these back-bush stations realise the advantages that the aeroplane might give them.

Our next stop was at Newcastle Waters, a control point on that immense overland telegraph line that runs through the centre of Australia for 2,000 miles, from Port Darwin in the north to Adelaide in the south. This telegraph line is actually the only landmark through the central part of Australia, for there is a cutting made in the scrub, which is as a glorious white line when seen from the air and easy to follow.

From Newcastle Waters, which is really only a name and one tiny hut, our next stop was to be at Tennant's Creek, another control point south-west

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along the telegraph line. The operator at Tennant's Creek was known as a most taciturn individual, but was reputed to have one hobby which he practised to the best of his isolated ability. This hobby, strangely enough, was horse-racing, which is uncanny when you think that the nearest race-track to him was thousands of miles away. His Excellency, having been told of this man's peculiarity (I forget his name), had brought with him a parcel of all the latest newspapers and sporting editions of the racing world.

We landed at Tennant's Creek just before luncheon, and so quiet and apparently unfriendly was the control officer there, that he never even walked the three or four hundred yards to the aerodrome to meet us. This action could not have been construed in any way as rudeness or disrespect. It was merely the trait of one who has lived, and is living, in such solitude as Tennant's Creek possesses. He thawed a little when His Excellency was introduced to him, but he positively beamed when his newspapers were given to him and he was able to read of the events of the race-track. He discovered an amiable guest in the person of the Governor-General, who was able to talk to him not only enthusiastically, but also with certain knowledge of horse-racing and breeding and such things that delight the heart of the racing man. However, I do believe the control officer there, on the whole, rather resented our appearance,

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and when he walked to the aerodrome to see us off it was more to speed the parting guest than that he was loath to see us depart.

The centre of Australia is a dismal piece of country. Flat for hundreds and hundreds of miles, scrub covering the red sand earth, blue skies touching the clear-cut horizon all round, and no sign of movement or life other than the queer spirals of dust which soar heavenwards promoted by queer wind eddies. Often these willy-willies, as they are called, will reach a height of two or three thousand feet from their origin to their summit, and it is not an unusual thing to see ten or more of them from one point.

There are no real mountain ranges in Australia. Although printed large on the map is the Macdonnell Range, which somehow I had imagined to be a sort of backbone to Australia, in the same way that our Pennine Range is the backbone of England. I was sadly disappointed, when flying to Alice Springs, to discover that this Macdonnell Range was a mere line of low hills probably not more than 1,000 to 1,200 feet high.

We landed at Alice Springs in the late afternoon and prepared to spend the night there. Alice Springs is, of course, another control point along the Overland Telegraph Line and is the capital (only in name) of Central Australia, for its population could not be more than two hundred. It exists chiefly, I suppose, as a settlement for the

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aboriginal natives, and blankets and food are issued to these at various times. It is also the kicking-off place for the Opal Mines at Duck Creek, 200 miles to the eastward. They actually manufactured ice there, and any of us who have experienced the rigours of really hot weather can appreciate the value of ice. At dinner that night the host of the small guest-house where we were staying produced from some hidden cupboard a bottle of claret, which wine so impressed His Excellency that he asked if he could purchase two or three bottles to take away with him. Acquiescence was, I think, a little grudgingly given, but it was very fine wine. We learnt, also from our host, that there was an aboriginal settlement some seventy miles to the westward known as Hermansburg, where two Lutheran mission men conducted a school, and made peace between the tribes around them. His Excellency was very anxious to visit this settlement, but on being told that the journey of seventy miles was only possible by camel and would take three days, abandoned any hope he might have had of visiting it. I suggested, however, that we should fly over the place and see if I could find a clay pan on which I might land. I assured His Excellency that I would not attempt a landing unless I was absolutely sure that the ground was suitable.

I do not think I have mentioned that our party on this particular trip consisted of His Excellency the Governor-General (Lord Stonehaven), an A.D.C.,

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myself and my mechanic, George Nutson. George's and my job was to keep the aeroplane going and to try and keep it in a clean condition. This latter was very difficult, as every time the machine landed or flew through a dust storm, of which there are many in Central Australia, the entire fuselage and wings would be coated with a thin layer of red dust. When one has no water to wash the aeroplane with, keeping it in a clean state under these conditions is more than difficult, but we solved the problem and made a fair job of its appearance by the liberal use of rags and petrol. George, only a youngster, was a very good mechanic, and had been selected not only because of his mechanical qualifications, but also because he was small and light, which made the total load by aeroplane as moderate as was possible.

The next morning we left Alice Springs for Oodnadatta, but making a detour towards Hermansburg in case we could land there.

Hermansburg lies to the westward on the south side of the Macdonnell Range, and its position is only approximate on the map that I carried. After about forty minutes' flying I flew over this mission station, which, under the normal transport conditions of that area, would have taken three days by camel. What an unfavourable comparison this is. I was rather keen to be able to make a landing there myself, and I was overjoyed when I spotted a fine clay pan just outside the mission station.

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I cannot imagine the thoughts that must have rushed through the minds of the mission officers and the natives on seeing an aeroplane in that isolated place. The ground underneath us swarmed with rushing figures, whichever way the machine turned they would start running in that direction. If I turned, they turned, and when I turned again they would start their chase in wild pursuit. I fear I kept altering the course in the air to note how faithfully they followed on the ground beneath, and then I prepared to land. Unlike most crowds, they seemed to appreciate the very second when I was about to land, and just where I would, which, when you come to think of it, is rather remarkable, as none of these natives had ever seen an aeroplane before. But they left the clay pan absolutely clear and lined its edge until my machine came to rest. To them the machine was a "Big debil debil black hawk," but the significance of its illustrious passenger meant nothing to them.

As we stepped out of the machine it was circled immediately by these quite naked natives, but in their midst we all noticed simultaneously the presence of a white man. He rushed up to greet us, but the natives all remained in a circle about twenty-five yards away. This white man suddenly stopped in his forward rush, for he had noticed the presence of His Excellency the Governor-General of Australia. He advanced more slowly and said : "Your Excellency, I give you welcome

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to Hermansburg." I wonder how many other people would have been so readily apt in their address as this man, Mr. Heinrich.

After a minute of preliminary cordiality he turned his back on us and addressed the natives in their own dialect. We were amazed to see them all form up in a long line, the tallest at either end, tapering down in the middle to the small children. Never have I seen anything so funny as these naked people, perfectly sized, in a straight line with their rather ugly fat black tummies. My mirth suddenly changed to amazement, as it did with all of us, for at a given signal this entire troop started to sing in English "God, save the King." Somehow or other, never in all my life have I been so impressed and so proud of our Empire and our monarchy as I was there in the centre of one of the greatest countries of the world, listening to a handful of uncivilised, uneducated natives, with two German Lutheran missionaries as tutors, singing the National Anthem of our King. We all stood to attention and His Excellency raised his hand, and I am quite prepared to believe that he had never had a more proud moment as His Majesty's representative in Australia, than that day at Hermansburg, listening to the queer singing of these aboriginal natives.

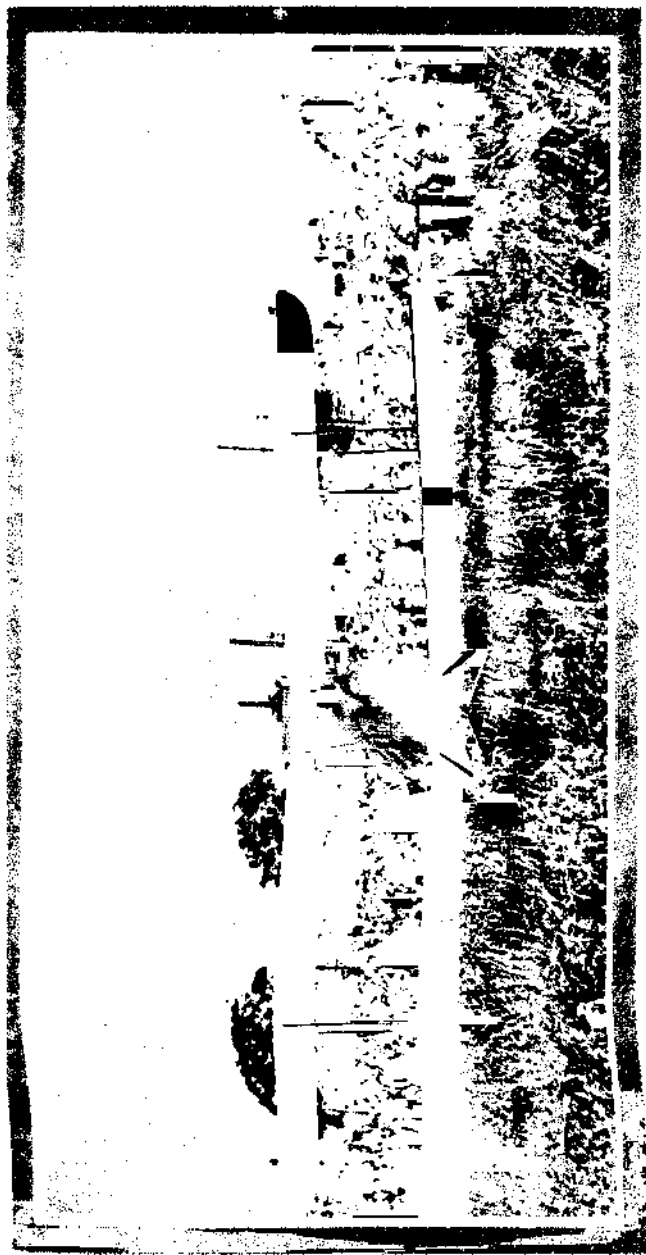
The singing over, Mr. Heinrich began talking to His Excellency, who learned that a school for the children was being run at this mission station and

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attempts made to teach them English. On hearing about the school, the Governor asked whether the children might have a half holiday to commemorate his visit. This was readily given, and Mr. Heinrich, on telling the children this, asked them what they were going to do about it. Again, as though it was a rehearsed play, the children stood up in a long line and sang "For he's a jolly good fellow." I dare swear that the National Anthem and this song were the only English words they knew. What a marvellous selection! Obviously what surprised us all most was the instinctive way that these two performances were carried out, particularly as we all knew our visit could not have been previously announced in any way.

We spent an hour or so on the mission station, escorted by Mr. Heinrich and his colleague, Mr. Albercht. The only white woman was Mrs. Albercht, who, strangely enough, spoke rather poor English. The Governor-General talked with her in German. We all left Hermansburg with regret, and I promised to call in at Hermansburg if ever I was that way again, which at that time was a possibility I considered most remote.

On reaching Oodnadatta that evening, having passed along the dry river bed of the Finke River, we ascertained that the train was ready to take His Excellency South the next morning. My own journey was 750 miles over the desert to Longreach. I was due to leave at daybreak with George



SCOTT LANDING AT HARGRAVE PARK, SYDNEY, AFTER HIS THIRD RECORD FLIGHT, BEATING BUTLER'S TIME FROM ENGLAND TO AUSTRALIA BY SIX HOURS

Photo: L.N.A.

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Nutson. When retiring for the night His Excellency asked me to see him before I left the next morning. This I did.

I went into his bedroom in the tiny hotel where we were staying to take my leave. After wishing me a safe journey and making me promise that I would send him a wire on arrival at Longreach (for the desert over which I was to fly had never been crossed before), he suddenly said: "You remember the afternoon we left Camooweal and had tea at Allroy Downs," and when I nodded, he continued, "you were lost, weren't you?" and I had to confess that this was so. I think this rather pleased him, and I assured him that I did not advise him of the fact at the time in case it might worry him over the rest of our trip. He was awfully kind and said that he had perfect confidence in me. He visited me only a fortnight later, but it was I then who was in bed and he standing at my bedside.

As dawn was breaking I took off on the 700 odd miles trip to Longreach. Because I had insufficient petrol capacity to do the whole journey, I carried in the cabin another seventy gallons of petrol in tins, and my idea was to pick some place to land on and re-fill my tanks from these tins. Head office at Longreach had assured me that it was absolutely unnecessary to cross this desert unless I was so minded, for it was perfectly in order, they said, to travel South and then Eastward

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and then Northward, to circumnavigate this barren area of Australia. This area is marked on the map as "No habitation and no water," but I was young in those days and got quite a thrill out of going somewhere where no one had ever gone before. The sky was very red in the east and the sun rose like a ball of fire through the dust haze which sprang from the ground in the early morning wind. When it was absolute daylight and one could see all around, I was struck with the curious country underneath me. As far as I could see in every direction there were lines upon lines of sand-hills, all absolutely parallel and resembling perfectly the waves on an angry sea. I suppose the prevailing wind had made these queer contours. There were no features on the ground that could tell me my position and I flew entirely by dead reckoning on a compass course, calculating that my ground speed was somewhere in the region of 100 miles an hour. I had sure petrol for 400 miles and, after three and a half hours' flying, passing over a reddy-white looking clay pan, decided I would land and replenish my tanks from the reserve supply of tins in the cabin.

I was very careful at this time to make sure that the ground I was landing on was as hard as it looked, for had it been soft or sandy and my machine had turned over in landing there, I would have been left without any means of salvation, so I flew low and slowly over the clay pan and actually

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touched my wheels in several places to make sure the ground was hard, and then flying round again made a landing on that portion I had inspected. My anxieties were ill-founded, for when I had actually landed and switched off my engine, I found the ground as hard as concrete, and actually this clay pan was a magnificent aerodrome for miles in every direction, and as flat as the proverbial billiard table.

George and I first of all filled our tanks from our reserve supply, and then, opening up a tin of sausages, proceeded to eat breakfast. Breakfast over, with no other society to bother us, we left our empty petrol tins and our sausage tins in the middle of the desert. When I took off I could see the sun reflected from the tins we left in that waste, and I could not help but think of a possible party at some future date discovering our refuse there and wondering what its origin might be. Soon after this I flew past the first sign of habitation in 400 miles, and very soon flew into the country that I knew. Our 700 mile trip took us just seven hours, and I was rather elated and glad when I landed on my own aerodrome at Longreach.

I reported to the office, and filled in my Trip Report with its remarks, and was surprised and glad to know that I had been selected for another long taxi trip in a week's time. This taxi trip was to be 2,000 miles longer than the one I had just

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completed, and I was glad of it, as the routine of carrying the mails could not be mine for at least another fortnight. Starting from Longreach, the plan of the trip was to fly to Hughendon and from there, after picking up no less a person than Air-Marshal Sir John Salmond, who was making a trip in Australia to advise the Government there on defence schemes, to fly to Port Darwin and right through Central Australia to Adelaide, where my passengers would leave me. I would then ferry my machine the 1,000 miles back to Longreach. In all, this trip would be over 5,000 miles, which at that time was the longest taxi trip ever undertaken in the Commonwealth. I used my same old machine and took with me again George Nutson. It will be remembered that the compass I had fitted for the trip with His Excellency was placed forward of the control column on the floor, and this compass in that position had functioned perfectly.

I picked up Sir John Salmond, as arranged, to schedule and flew to Brunette Downs that night. The following day we flew via Newcastle Waters and then north-west to Port Darwin, this last stage of the journey over new country to me.

I had been living at this time for over twelve months in the western districts of Queensland, far away from the sea, so when we reached Port Darwin it was with immense joy that I saw the sea again. How lovely and how blue it looked.

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This was my first visit to Port Darwin. Three subsequent visits have been of more importance to me, but I always remember the first and the particularly happy atmosphere that exists always at Port Darwin. On the night of our arrival there, we were entertained at the Club of the British Legion, whose members were rather boisterous, but awfully nice fellows. Sir John's arrival in Port Darwin was a fine excuse for a party, which I am sure he enjoyed as much as I did.

Port Darwin is quite a small township in north-western Australia, which could be really very much bigger. I should say there are not more than 3,000 inhabitants there, two-thirds of whom must be Japanese or Chinese. Its chief industry is its pearling fleet, but at one time it was hoped to make it the export port of north-western Australia for frozen meat. The idea was that all the cattle of the Northern Territory would be marched to Darwin, slaughtered there and frozen, and shipped from that port. A large meat works was built at Port Darwin at a cost, I remember, of nearly £1,000,000, but, having built it, labour troubles developed in the north-west and it has remained idle since its opening season. Now cattle are driven the 2,000 odd miles down to Adelaide, and the time taken to drive these beasts over this distance is sometimes as much as two years.

There was one curious event that happened in Port Darwin, and that was a man presenting a

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letter of introduction to me from the old Commanding Officer of my Air Force days. This Commanding Officer had a brother who was stationed at Port Darwin, and he had written to him and casually said : " You might meet Scott, and if so this letter will serve as an introduction." I wonder if my old Commanding Officer had realised the enormous size of Australia and what a coincidence it would be if we met, but in this case the coincidence occurred.

Port Darwin was a station of the Telegraph Company, and in direct communication with Banjewange, and from thence to England and other parts of the world. I remember we had rather fun one evening during a slack period tapping out rude messages to the operator at the other end of the wire. He would receive our rude message and tap back an even ruder one.

We spent three days in Darwin, on one of which George Nutson and I went fishing. This fishing expedition was not much of a success from the point of view of our catch, and it consisted mostly, as far as I can remember, of dropping anchor at one place, pulling the anchor up and going to another place where we hoped we would have better sport. Our bag consisted of one or two small sharks and one or two equally inedible fish.

We left Port Darwin at daybreak on the morning

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of our third day, with the object of flying as far south as Tennant's Creek. This was our pre-arranged schedule. Sir John Salmond had spoken to me many times and told me that he very much wanted to get hold of some aboriginal weapons to take back to England to his small daughters, but so far, he said, he had been unable to procure any. As we were flying from Darwin down to Newcastle Waters, where we were to re-fuel, I suddenly remembered Hermansburg and I passed a chit through to the cabin and said that if Sir John did not mind doing a little extra flying to-day we could include Hermansburg in our itinerary to-morrow and still keep to our schedule. This he readily agreed to and on that day I did the longest day's flying I had ever done up to that time. Certainly we only covered about 1,000 miles, but it must be remembered that I had to land on three occasions to re-fuel and that re-fuelling was done by hand.

We spent that night at Alice Springs, and the next morning woke to discover a violent dust storm. Sir John Salmond was rather worried lest I should lose my way trying to find Hermansburg in the dust, but I assured him that I had been there before and thought I could find my way. However, in spite of my assurance, I was very glad when I actually flew over the Mission Station. We landed in the same spot. Mr. Heinrich was terribly glad to see us and I reminded him of my

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promise of only a fortnight before. When one comes to think of it, it is rather amazing that one should pay two visits to such an out-of-the-way place within such a short space of time. Sir John Salmond was able to get all the aboriginal weapons he wanted and these we loaded into our machine.

Before we left Mr. Heinrich asked us if we had ever seen boomerangs being thrown, and although we had several of these now in the cabin of the machine, we all had to confess that we had never really seen them demonstrated. Whereupon Mr. Heinrich called to one of the black fellows, a tiny wiry little man, who, picking up a boomerang that I should think must have weighed nearly two pounds, took a short run of two or three paces and with a quick flick of the wrist sent the boomerang whirling into the sky. It seemed to soar an incredible distance, and reaching its peak returned almost to the native's hand. The boomerang was given to me to see if I could do anything with it. I am six foot one inch, and weighed at that time nearly 180 lbs. I was only able to throw this boomerang a distance of about 30 yards. At that time a bird, flying, I am sure, not less than 150 feet high, came soaring past, and picking up a smaller and a lighter boomerang this native sent his missile hurtling into the air. The weapon seemed to encircle the bird as though drawn to it by some magnetic influence and the bird dropped

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with a broken wing, and the boomerang returned to the native's hand. Next this native picked up an even smaller and very light boomerang, and, after bending it over his knee, or so it seemed to us, appeared to throw it straight at the ground, but the boomerang never reached the ground. Instead of that it started travelling towards three trees that stood about twenty-five yards away from us and ten feet apart. It circled the first of these three trees, came back and passed behind us, and approaching from our rear was caught by the native in his hand without moving his feet from the original position he had had when he threw it. Again he threw the boomerang and this time its arc of flight encircled two of the trees, and again he caught it as it completed its circle and returned to his hand. On the third time it encircled all three trees, but he was careless with his catching of it and, though it touched his hand, it slipped from his grasp and fell at his feet.

The Australian aboriginal is supposed to be the crudest form of human life on the earth, but as Mark Twain points out, if this is so how does one account for the fact that no other race in the world can use a boomerang or has the ability to track over the most barren and hard ground? Mark Twain claimed that instead of being of such low mentality they far exceeded our own civilised races.

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We left Hermansburg that afternoon for Oodnadatta, and the following day we landed at Parafield Aerodrome, Adelaide, up to the minute of our schedule. This was the first big city I had been in since I left Brisbane for Charleville fourteen months before.

CHAPTER VIII

A DISASTROUS ACCIDENT

In which I tell of my journey back from Adelaide : how the clouds thickened and forced me to fly blind, how my machine dropped into a spin at 3,000 feet and met the earth with a crash, how I woke to find flames licking my cheeks and how I pulled George Nutson from the burning petrol and ran for help. But it was hospital and sick-leave for me, and George never recovered. A cruise to Hong Kong finally set me on my feet again.

WE remained that night and the following day in Adelaide and prepared to leave at daybreak on the second morning, en route to Longreach, via Broken Hill, and Bourke. I hoped to leave Parafield Aerodrome as soon as it was daylight, and not knowing what petrol facilities would be available at Broken Hill I filled the cabin of the machine with a reserve supply of tins, as I had done on my previous trip from Oodnadatta to Longreach. I remember the morning very well. Daylight was creeping over the sky from the eastward and black clouds were hanging close to the summit of the mountain ranges to the northward. There was a drizzle of fine rain, but I knew that this rather unpleasant morning at Parafield would be displaced by gloriously fine weather

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once the hill ranges were crossed. We took off, I in the cockpit and George Nutson and the petrol in the cabin.

My object was to fly through the clouds into the clear sky above, and then, steering a course over the top of the clouds, come down once the other side of the mountains had been reached. There was a queer cloud formation just above the aerodrome, in the middle of which was a kind of chimney. I proceeded to climb up through this in an endeavour to reach the blue sky above the cloud level, with as little blind flying as was possible. Suddenly, as clouds often will, they changed their formation and the chimney closed in on each side of us, and I was flying in the murky opaqueness of these early morning clouds. There was nothing at all alarming or unusual in this.

When one is flying blind there are instruments designed to help the pilot. Briefly, they are these : A compass will tell one the direction, and an air-speed indicator will tell one the speed through the air. If the throttle opening remains constant, and the normal cruising speed of the machine with the throttle open is 95 miles an hour, or as long as one's compass needle remains steady and the air-speed indicator has stopped at 95 miles an hour, one is assured that one is flying straight and level.

We had no turn or bank indicator in our machine. Having entered the clouds I immediately looked

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down at my compass to set myself on a straight course and was aware immediately that the compass was not visible on the floor of the machine. It will be remembered that I had had this compass placed in the machine for these long taxi trips, but until this particular moment I had not had to use it in any sort of bad weather, so that it was with great consternation that I found, too late, that I had to trust merely to chance to keep a straight course.

I was rather concerned about the proximity of the mountains, whose tops were lost in the clouds, but I kept the nose of the machine up in a climbing angle and hoped to climb through the clouds safely and soon. With only this air-speed indicator to assist me I continued climbing for a minute or so, but when the air-speed indicator showed an increase of speed I could only assume that the nose of the machine had dropped and we were in a slight dive, for there was no compass to tell me if I was actually in a turn with the nose down. I eased the control column backwards, which should have had the effect of reducing speed by lifting the nose, but instead of this the air-speed increased. I eased the control column still further back and then suddenly, when it was too late, realised that I had been in a very steep turn, and that the movements on the control column had accentuated this, and with the heavy load of petrol that I had on board the machine was stalling, and it flicked into a

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spin. Normally, there is nothing very terrible in a spin, but in a cloud with no instruments to help you and a big load of petrol on board, it is quite a different matter.

From the moment the machine started to spin I was certain of two things. One, that I was going to spin into the ground, and two, that I would not be hurt. I just had time to glance at my altimeter, that showed me the height of 3,000 feet. If the cloud base did not reach to the ground, I would have sufficient height underneath to recover normal flying position. If, on the other hand, the cloud base was down to the ground I must hit the ground, unless I could recover control through the cloud.

The machine was spinning to the left and I straightened it up out of that spin, but before I had time to get back into flying position into level flight again, the machine flicked into a right-hand spin. There was a second or an infinitesimally short period of time when I thought I saw something directly underneath me, or, in other words, near the nose of the machine which was descending vertically earthwards, but it may only have been imagination, for I can remember nothing else.

I recovered consciousness—how long after I cannot say—but it must have been a matter of seconds or minutes only, to find myself enveloped in flames.

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There was a sickening period when, with my wits not quite about me, I started brushing the flames away from my head and face with my gloved hands. I remember saying out loud to myself: "How soft these flames are," for in my benumbed and bemused state, there seemed no bite or sting in them. A quickening consciousness, however, impelled me to try and extricate myself from the crashed machine, and this I was able to do, and rolled away from the bonfire of petrol, fabric and oil. I seemed to be one mass of blood; and then I suddenly remembered George Nutson in the cabin of the machine. Without thinking—and it was certainly no act of heroism, for I was still doped with the force of our impact on the ground—I staggered into the flames and dragged him clear of the cabin on to the ground away from the machine. Those terrible tins of petrol in the cabin had all burst and saturated his clothing with spirit, so that he was nothing better than a living torch. I was so dazed and bewildered that I tried to beat the flames out with my hands and, finding this of no avail, again re-entered the bonfire to try and find a fire extinguisher that we carried in the machine. This time I could get nowhere near the machine, so I went back to George and ripped his clothes from his poor body. He was still conscious, poor lad, and somehow I do not think he was in very much pain, but he kept

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crying : " I can't see ; I can't see ! " which words ate into me deeply. I tried to be cheerful and said : " Of course you can't see ; your eyelids are all singed." So I tied my burnt scarf round his face and, covering his naked body with my coat, left him there on the hill-side by our burning aeroplane, and staggered off into the fog for help.

Have you ever tried to walk in search of help when you have just spun 1,800 feet into the ground, and you are not sure in which direction help may lie ? Visibility could not have been more than 100 yards, and we were on the rocky and grass slope of a hill-side. I tried to collect my wits, and argued with myself that there must be a road at the bottom of the slope, so I scrambled falteringly down to another level. After much painful progress I discovered that the slope gave way to a precipitous gorge, which I could not hope to negotiate in my condition. I turned and wearily climbed up the slope I had come down, and worked my way in the opposite direction. I had to remember the direction I was travelling in, for if found, I had to be able to tell any rescuers the exact locality of the machine. I remember I passed through a wheat-field, and I remember crossing a small stream, and all the while on my journeying I was shouting, " Help ! help ! " as loud as a broken face would permit. My mouth seemed very full of teeth, and my top



[Photo: L.N.A.]

SCOTT AND MR. A. O. EDWARDS, OWNER OF THE WINNING COMET.

"In twenty minutes the whole thing was settled, signed and sealed. Tom Black and I were booked for one of the Comets."

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jaw was broken and was hanging down over my chin. After what seemed hours of aimless wandering, I saw a house and was terrified that it was uninhabited, as no smoke appeared from any of the chimneys and not even a dog barked, as I staggered towards the door. I could not have gone any farther, but I knocked on the door with my burnt hands. An awful wait ensued, and I thumped again. Mercifully the door opened and a woman appeared, who seeing me (I must have looked an awful sight, for I was covered in blood) almost screamed "My God!" and slammed the door in my face. I remembered then collapsing on the cobble stones outside the door, and then a man appeared. To him, by diagrams in the dust on the cobble stones and by inarticulate sounds, I was able to explain the position of our aeroplane and George Nutson.

Fortunately, in that house that I had thought desolate there was a telephone, and a car, and he rang up immediately for other cars and men to go in search. He went off himself and left me on the doorstep, for I would not go inside to dirty his clean house. The woman, who was rather unnerved, I think by the spectacle I presented, gave me a basin of warm water and a towel and I bathed my face, which was quite the worst thing I could do to it, but I did not realise how badly it was burnt.

How long after this it was I cannot remember,

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and I have only vague recollections of an unending drive in a motor-car and myself being sick nearly all the time on its floor, and an eventual arrival at the Adelaide Hospital. George had been there nearly half an hour by the time I arrived.

I remembered feeling so distressed when they undressed me, for they cut all my clothes off—which is quite usual—but when they took my shoes and socks off I realised my feet must be so dirty after crossing ploughed fields and streams, and wanted to apologise for them and assure them that I had bathed that morning, but I could not make any sound worthy of the name of speech. I remember, too, there was a gramophone playing somewhere, and I tried to beat time to its rhythm with my hand, and then a doctor came along and started to feel me over for broken bones. He started with my toes and worked up my legs, and then I heard a Sister say: "Oh, but he walked a mile and a half; his legs must be all right," and so they tested the arm I wasn't beating time with. That seemed all right, so they discovered only some injured ribs and a broken and burnt face and hands.

I was put in a sort of shock cradle that was all white and had lots of little lights inside it, and an extraordinary feeling of peace came over me, for I knew that George was in a similar cradle in the next bed, and hoped that he was feeling as comfortable as I was. The crash happened

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about half-past six on the morning of September 4th, 1928, and George died just twelve hours later.

I was three weeks in the General Hospital in Adelaide, before I could be moved, and many people came to see me. The last time I had seen His Excellency the Governor-General was while he was in bed. The next time I saw him was when he called on me in bed in the hospital. I did appreciate his visit so much. Sir John Salmond had by that time left for Melbourne and New Zealand, but there were continual messages from him and inquiries as to my welfare.

Their Excellencies the Governor of South Australia, and his lady, were most solicitous and kind, and my room in the hospital had all the varieties of flowers of the Government House gardens. I remember that Lady Hore Ruthven called one Sunday morning with an A.D.C., the Hon. Hugh Grosvenor, whom I had met several times before. He looked so funny standing at the end of my bed with his silk hat in his hand. That was the last time I ever saw him, for he crashed soon afterwards in Port Philip Bay and was never seen again.

After three weeks I was moved to a Roman Catholic Nursing Home, where the Sisters were so kind to me, difference of faith seemed to matter not at all.

As soon as I was fit enough, I travelled to Melbourne to be present at the Court of Inquiry

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on the crash. I was found not guilty of any negligence, and was exonerated from all blame, so I continued my journey by train to Longreach and arrived there two days before the body of George Nutson, who was to be buried in that town. The memory of his funeral always worries me, for in that outlandish place there was not a flower one could place on his grave, and the wreaths that we all sent had those curious glass flowers that tinkled as they were placed on his coffin.

I would have been unfit for flying for at least three months, and was sent on sick-leave.

I was not quite sure where to spend my sick-leave and had no wish, or the health, for the gaieties of the Australian capital cities, so I journeyed to Brisbane from Longreach first and went along to a shipping office to find what trip I could take that would fill in my time. I selected a voyage from Brisbane to Hong-Kong, via Thursday Island and Manilla down the China Sea to Singapore, and back to Brisbane via Java and Celebes.

Thursday Island impressed me most by its marvellous green colourings, the gorgeousness of the Bougainvillea, and the Quetta Memorial Cathedral. This last was consecrated in memory of that tragic shipping disaster of many years ago when the *Quetta* struck a reef just outside Thursday Island and went down with the loss of almost her entire complement of passengers and crew.

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Between Thursday Island and Manilla one passes across the Arafuria Sea, in the middle of which is a tiny piece of rock known as "Bird Island" because of the birds that congregate and nest there. As our ship passed about half a mile from this rock, the ship's siren was blown and a rocket fired and, as though taking their cue, all the birds on the island soared up in the air hovering a minute or so and then flocked back. Every ship that passes is given the same performance ; I should think it must be the most successful show ever produced.

Manilla is the prettiest of places as seen from the shores of the Philippine Islands. One thing I noticed particularly in the Manilla Harbour was the comparison between the ships of the United States Navy that were anchored there and our own, the aircraft carrier *Hermes*, which was paying a friendly visit to Manilla. It is customary, I believe, for merchantmen and passenger ships to dip their ensigns as an act of courtesy to all warships. On entering the harbour we passed the *Hermes* first, and our own ensign had barely left the truck when the *Hermes* ensign was dipped in reply, but as we passed the warships of the United States Navy the interval of time in replying to our salute was often so long that we were many hundreds of yards past before their own flags were dipped. When the harbour gun sounded the sunset hour, the *Hermes* flags were

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down on deck before the echo had ceased and her lights were all burning. The United States ships, on the other hand, took their time about it, and it was fully half an hour later that the last of their ships' flags was lowered and riding lights put on. They have obviously different customs in different ships.

There was no Prohibition in the Philippine Islands, and the amount of alcohol consumed there seemed out of proportion to its population, but perhaps I was prejudiced and biased, as I was on a non-alcoholic diet myself. One funny thing I remember at Manilla was the dance hall at Santa Anna. This dance floor was divided into two sections, one section of which was reserved for white people and the other open to all. As all the white people danced in the coloured section, it seemed rather a waste of space to have a white reservation. Hell's Kitchen was a place where one had bacon and eggs, but there was nothing to make it resemble one's conception of Hades. Manilla is a fine town, and one can get very good cigars there, so that the ship's doctor was able to benefit by their purchase !

When we entered Hong Kong harbour we nearly ran down a Chinese junk which was sailing along without lights. This junk was almost pooped in fact by our bow, but instead of being terribly cross and angry, these Chinamen seemed to think it was a good joke, and one actually

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learnt afterwards that it is terribly good joss, from the Chinese point of view, to miss being run over by a hair's breadth as there is quite a good chance of one's running over, or destroying, the devil that follows close on every Chinaman's death. This is equally apparent in the streets of Hong Kong with the seemingly suicidal tendency of the Chinese pedestrian.

I remember Hong Kong best for the Repulse Bay Hotel, and the sight from the peak looking down on Hong Kong city itself, and across the harbour to Kowloon. The night I went up the funicular railway from the foot of its peak to its top, I was told to sit facing the engine, and not to look back until the summit had been reached. In that way I would get the effect of a sudden change, as though a magic lantern slide had suddenly been opened in front of me and the whole kaleidoscopic picture of Hong Kong and Kowloon had become suddenly real. What a magnificent spectacle that is, and how can one describe the beauty of those miles of twinkling lights—white, yellow, green, red and blue—on the floor beneath! Even the waters of the harbour seemed a deep purple reflecting the lights of the ships that were anchored there.

I had originally intended to sail the morning after my arrival at Hong Kong to Singapore, but I was so delighted with Hong Kong itself that I prolonged my stay and actually journeyed back

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to Australia in the same ship in which I had journeyed to Hong Kong. What a change it was to travel in that ship after the previous voyage I had made to Australia. I remember only one passenger on that Australian-bound voyage, and I remember her particularly, for she sat at the same table as myself, and she, poor soul, was stone deaf, but would not realise it. Always at the most awkward moments during meals she would bawl out some question to me in a high-pitched voice which all the saloon would hear, and having heard her question would immediately remain silent while I screamed back my reply. I asked the purser if he could not move my position, and he replied that it was terribly difficult and would seem frightfully rude. This I realised, and would arrive either very early or very late for all my meals.

I was able to get back at the purser, though, on one occasion, for this lady passenger, in spite of her deafness, was very fond of dancing, but being unable to hear a note of the music being played she had no sense of either time or rhythm, so that as a partner she was very little good. Dancing took place on deck, and our orchestra was a gramophone. One night the purser, in the course of his social activities asked this passenger to dance. Normally each dance was merely one side of the record, and there would be an interval for rest and change of partner, but I took over

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the duties of keeping the gramophone going, and before he had time to relinquish his partner, turned the needle back to the beginning again, and kept him dancing until they were both at the point of exhaustion. It was poor recompense for my situation in the saloon, but it was the best I could do.

CHAPTER IX

FLYING INSTRUCTOR

In which I return to flying once again and tell of my experiences at the School of Flying in Brisbane : how I used to go up myself as the first passenger of my various pupils until a lucky escape unnerved me, how I soon got tired of the daily routine and was ready for a change.

I RETURNED to flying duties at the end of January, 1929.

When I first recommenced flying, I was a little worried lest my crash had unnerved me in any way, and was very glad to find that my nervous system was not impaired, nor had I lost my touch. Everyone along the route was very sympathetic. For three months I continued flying the mails, with Longreach as my head-quarters, when suddenly I was posted to Brisbane to take over the duties of flying instructor at the School of Flying we were running there. This was a welcome relief, for it meant domicile in Brisbane instead of the outlandish back-rocks and heat of Longreach.

The school that I took over had three Moths and, at the beginning, not more than twenty pupils. In the summer months when the weather was frightfully hot, I would start flying at five o'clock

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each morning and return for breakfast at eight-thirty, and continue any flying during the morning, but ceased work in the afternoon. This was because weather conditions were so unsuitable after luncheon that it made flying for the beginner difficult and dangerous. I got quite into the habit of rising daily at four, and would go to bed at eight o'clock each night.

I soon discovered, however, that any job you have to do continuously becomes tedious, and heartily disliked being an instructor after quite a short period. One got so tired telling people of the same mistake so often.

New pupils would be given such dual instruction as I thought necessary and would be sent off solo to do sufficient solo flying to enable them to qualify for their "A" licences. When they had obtained this "A" licence, and had completed twenty hours' solo flying, if in my opinion they were considered suitable, they were allowed to carry passengers. Because I had taught these people to fly, and because I felt I should have the courage of my convictions in their ability to carry passengers, as a *beau geste*, I would remove all the controls from the front cockpit and fly with them myself as their first passenger. Quite frankly, I hated and was terrified of this, but after all it was only fair when one had assessed them capable of carrying passengers, and there was no reason why I should be exempt. I think they all

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appreciated this, and were all very gentle with me when I was their passenger.

There was one outstanding pupil that I remember, for she was a lady surgeon, and quite the easiest of any I have taught to fly. She made all the mistakes of the beginner, but having been told her mistakes once she never made them again, and even with her landings she soon assimilated that delicate performance and very quickly went solo.

A pupil's first "solo" is always an anxious period for an instructor, for although he is certain in his own mind that a pupil is capable of flying a machine by himself or herself, he is never quite sure what the reaction of that pupil may be on discovering himself in the air alone for the first time. With this lady surgeon, however, I was absolutely confident, and she went off and flew a machine as perfectly as I could have done it myself. She took her "A" licence in average time, because she said that when she went up for her "A" licence test she wanted to be positive and certain of passing, and after her twenty hours of solo flying she hoped that I would be her first passenger. This I readily agreed to, and knew that with her I could be far more happy than I had been with some of the others. It was a Sunday morning at ten o'clock when she was to take me up in the sky—again, of course, without any controls in my cockpit, and I had a pupil booked for a lesson at

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ten-fifteen. For some reason or other, this lady doctor arrived late and I was already in another machine, with my pupil, when she arrived on the aerodrome tarmac. I apologised to her, said that I would give this lesson first, and come up with her afterwards, but in the meantime she could do some flying by herself. We both taxied out on the lee side of the aerodrome at the same time, and I let her take off before I took off with my pupil. She took off perfectly all right, and had reached a height of about one hundred feet a few yards over the windward edge of the aerodrome, when I saw her engine give forth a lot of black smoke, splutter and stop. What the pilot should have done then, obeying all the rules of flying, was to have kept straight on and pulled off some sort of a landing into wind. What this lady doctor did put my heart in my mouth, for she turned down wind and flew towards the aerodrome. Having committed that one offence against the creed of good flying, and got away with it, she would have been perfectly all right had she attempted to land down wind on the aerodrome, but instead of doing this, to my horror and amazement she again turned to 180° and tried to land into wind at a height of about forty feet. The machine lost all flying speed, stalled, and crashed.

I taxied over to the crash from which she was struggling to get out, and her first expressions to me were those of sorrow for what she had done.

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I helped her to the first-aid station we had on the aerodrome where, standing in front of a mirror, she looked at her face. Her goggles had given her two cuts under her eyes and there was a nasty gash on her nose. With a professional mien she examined these three cuts and said: "Hem, two stitches here, two stitches there, and one here." She herself rang up a doctor friend of hers and told him what tools and implements were necessary. This I thought was very plucky on her part. I gave her a spot of brandy, which she was very loath to accept, and then went and had a look at the machine. The back cockpit in which she had been flying was scarcely damaged, but the front cockpit in which I would have been sitting had she been a quarter of an hour earlier and kept her appointment, was smashed to smithereens, nobody who had been sitting in it could have escaped with less than broken legs, a damaged pelvis and severe head injuries, if the accident had not been absolutely fatal. After this episode I gave up flying as passenger at any time with my pupils.

Work continued with the school in Brisbane for that year and the beginning of next. The routine was the same one day after another. I had good pupils, I had bad pupils, and some merely indifferent. Some are flying along Empire airways now, others are merely good amateurs, others have given up flying altogether. One of my old pupils

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actually has the job now of instructing others that I had then, and is doing very well at it. I feel rather towards this man as a schoolmaster does towards a brilliant pupil.

CHAPTER X

ESCORT TO AMY JOHNSON

In which I tell how I was asked to fly to Port Darwin to meet Amy Johnson to escort her down to Brisbane, how she arrived safely and fired me with still greater enthusiasm to undertake the flight myself, how she was given a great reception everywhere, and how her astonishing achievement won all our admiration.

DURING the months of my instructing in Brisbane, there were many attempts by various pilots to lower the time taken with the solo flight from England to Australia—the time that Bertie Hinkler set up in February, 1928—but all these flights were unsuccessful, and the machines either returned to England or arrived in Australia after a leisured journey. Hinkler had fired in me an ambition to emulate his example, and I was constantly making schedules, working out courses, and poring over maps, to complete an itinerary in my imagination, if ever I had the chance to make an attempt on the solo record to Australia.

In May, 1930, there suddenly appeared in our Brisbane newspapers a name that has since become famous throughout the world. We read of a girl who was flying solo to Australia. Her name was



[Photo: Spori and General.]

**HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES DISCUSSING THE COMET WITH
SCOTT AND BLACK AT MILDENHALL.**

Escort to Amy Johnson

Amy Johnson. In truth, it must be said that not one of us flying men held out much hope for the success of her venture, but when it appeared in the press that she had arrived in India, at Karachi, one day ahead of the time taken by Squadron-Leader Bertie Hinkler, we all began to sit up and speculate on the possibility of her success. The newspapers in Australia, as they must have been in England, became full of this girl known as Amy Johnson. The *Brisbane Daily Mail*, in conjunction with Messrs. C. C. Wakefield & Company, chartered an aeroplane from us to fly from Brisbane to Port Darwin to meet Miss Johnson, should she ever reach there. Because I had been over the route before I was selected to pilot the machine to meet Miss Johnson, and with a reporter from the *Brisbane Daily Mail*, and a photographer and a representative of Messrs. C. C. Wakefield & Co., Ltd., I set off from Brisbane one morning to fly to Port Darwin.

What a relief it was to get away once more from the monotony of school instruction. So pleased was I at this release of mine that I covered the 1,200 miles of the journey in the first day and, because I had newspaper reporters on board, received a full quota of publicity for the achievement. This further fired my imagination and hope that I might one day embark on such a long journey as Miss Johnson was then attempting. We arrived in Port Darwin at lunch time on the second day,

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having completed the 1,996-mile journey in sixteen hours' flying time. I still have a photograph of myself beside my machine after that landing at Port Darwin. I also had a mechanic with me on this trip, but as soon as we arrived at Darwin he went sick and was admitted to the hospital there with a high temperature. This meant that I had all my own engine maintenance to perform myself.

We had arrived in Darwin at a time which, had Miss Johnson been able to keep up to her daily average, would give us merely a day's wait before her arrival, but she met with misfortune in the Dutch East Indies and was delayed several days. There came an afternoon, however, when she was expected hourly, for she had left Atamboea, in Timor Island, only 560 miles away, but all of it across the open sea.

Even though at that time I had had no experience of crossing large stretches of water in small aeroplanes, I could appreciate the anxiety that must have been Miss Johnson's at that time, and I know we all of us on the aerodrome that afternoon, and "all of us" means practically the whole population of Port Darwin, anxiously awaited the first sight of her, or the note of her tiny engine.

A few yards from the aerodrome boundary at Darwin, there is a granite memorial erected to commemorate the first flight from England to

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Australia. The inscription on it reads something like this :

TO COMMEMORATE THE LANDING OF
THE FIRST FLIGHT FROM ENGLAND TO
AUSTRALIA BY ROSS AND KEITH SMITH

—1919

Now, only eleven years after, an unknown English girl was about to emulate the example of those pioneer Smith brothers.

Although none of us at that time knew Amy Johnson, we thought of her always as "Amy," and we were gazing seawards in the hope of one of us having the distinction of spotting her first, when she suddenly appeared from the opposite direction and flew low over the aerodrome in such a manner that you could almost sense her jubilation. She landed, and in that same second the world knew and acknowledged her achievement.

Imagine the setting : a broiling hot afternoon, the aerodrome dried brown and covered with waving grass, surrounded by the darker trees and the shrubs, with the brick wall of the jail standing at the north side of the aerodrome just between it and the blue. Imagine a sunburnt girl, wearing oil-stained shorts and shirt, the centre of an admiring and worshipping mass of people, each trying to shake her hand and wanting to carry her shoulder high, but hardly daring to let their enthusiasm go to such limits. Let it be said,

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there was no more modest person in the world than Amy Johnson at that moment. She was just a quiet, attractive English girl, of whom we were all justly proud. I made myself known to her before she was rushed to a waiting motor-car, and asked if I could be of any assistance to her or her aeroplane. I told her that I was the pilot of the other aeroplane on the ground, which was to escort her down to Brisbane, and she asked me if I would look over her aeroplane and engine for her.

When Amy and the admiring crowd had left, and there were only a few spectators grouped around her machine I went across and examined it myself. Never have I seen an engine in such an appalling condition. Compression was completely lacking in two of her four cylinders. The plugs, after the engine had cooled down, took two strong men and much perspiration to remove. The vent plug in the sump was only unscrewed by colossal strength and a huge spanner and tommy bar, and the propeller nuts were taken up anything from half to a complete turn. I cannot remember in detail all that was not well with that engine. It was perfectly understandable that it should have been in such a condition, but I for one would not have cared to cross 560 miles of open sea in that machine. All that it needed, however, was adjustment and ordinary maintenance routine, and this I and another helper soon accomplished.

Escort to Amy Johnson

I did not see Amy again that afternoon, but met her at a dance in the same British Legion Hall where I had had a party two years previously, and claimed the first dance. Somehow or other, she seemed to have changed. Whether it was the fact that she had replaced her shirt and shorts for a summer frock, and her hair was tidy and her hands clean, I do not know, but there was a different atmosphere about her. She had received a bunch of telegrams and cables about three feet high.

She rested in Darwin the next day, and then with myself acting as escort we flew away south and eastward towards Brisbane.

For the first few hundred miles after leaving Port Darwin there is a small railway line, and this we followed past Katherine and Birdum and landed at Daly Waters for fuel for both our aeroplanes.

My mechanic who, it will be remembered, went sick on our arrival at Port Darwin, was not with us on the return trip as he was still in hospital, so I had to do the refuelling of both my own and Amy's machine.

What surprised me most about her machine was its apparently very high cruising speed, for she only had a Gipsy I. engine of 100 h.p., yet she seemed to be able to cruise quite comfortably at a speed of between 90 and 95 miles an hour, which I consider extremely good.

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From Daly Waters we hoped to make Alexandra Downs that evening, but encountering very strong head winds over the Barkly tableland, I had visions of not reaching our destination before nightfall. I slowly opened up my engine, increasing my cruising speed to see how Amy could keep pace, and soon found that she was not lagging with my air speed in the vicinity of 105 miles an hour. The recognised route across the tableland of the Northern Territory is along a chain of bores through which the motor track passes, but obviously this road was not straight and actually forms two sides of a triangle. I flew a compass course that would make the base of the triangle, to save time, and Amy followed faithfully behind. We reached Alexandra just at dusk, and could just distinguish the wind stock hoisted for our benefit. We spent the night there, and I know that Amy was rather pleased that we were able to get away from the crowd of admirers at Darwin.

We left Alexandra next morning just after day-break, for Longreach, but before we left I spent nearly three-quarters of an hour trying to start Amy's engine. The weak compression that she had in two cylinders must have upset the mixture, and it was very difficult to start.

I shaped a course to Cloncurry, where we hoped to breakfast. Again I left the security of the road, and steered a compass course to save distance. Amy rather worried me by suddenly flying away

Escort to Amy Johnson

from me to observe something or other that interested her on the ground. All these detours from my compass course upset my calculations with regard to wind drift, and as I was flying over a featureless tableland there was a possibility of my losing my way, which, as I was acting as an escort, was a thing to be avoided. I picked up Mount Isa, however, and steered to Cloncurry over the hills, where we landed in time for a rather late breakfast. Before leaving Cloncurry, I advised Longreach of the probable hour of our arrival and, flying over the old mail route, reached Longreach in scheduled time.

There was quite a big crowd on the aerodrome there to welcome Miss Johnson. I landed first, as she always asked me to do this, and when she landed and taxied to the hangar she was again besieged by the crowd, who pressed their congratulations on her.

In Longreach we approached the borders of a more populated area—that of Western Queensland, and, of course, we were in direct touch with Brisbane and the capital cities of the south. The people of Charleville, however, wanted Amy to spend a night there, so that Charleville was to be our next day's journey.

On the way to Charleville we lost each other. I saw her one minute and the next minute, when I turned round to look for her, found she had vanished. What she had done I cannot say, and

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although I flew round and round waiting for her to come up to me, and though I flew high and low, I could not discover her anywhere. I searched for her on the ground in case she might have forced-landed, but as there was no trace of her I continued my journey to Charleville, then only 100 miles away. I said to myself: "If this girl can navigate her way from England to Port Darwin, surely she will have no difficulty in finding her way within 100 miles into Charleville, where there is a railway line and all sorts of things to help her pilot her course." I therefore flew into Charleville myself at my normal cruising speed and half expected to find Miss Johnson there by the time I arrived. The customary crowd, comprising nearly all the township, were on the aerodrome to welcome her.

When I landed the Mayor or Chairman of the Shire Council, as these dignitaries are called in Western Queensland, came up to me and asked where Miss Johnson was, and I replied as blandly as I was able: "Oh, she will be here in a minute." But when five minutes had passed and the town brass band were moistening their lips in anticipation of the saliva that they were going to give Amy and no Amy appeared, everyone, including myself, began to get a bit restless. Five minutes lengthened to half an hour and to an hour, and still no sign of Miss Johnson.

We heard nothing of her for nearly four hours,

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when a telephone message came through from a town called Quilpie, over 80 miles to the westward, where Amy had landed. She was then told over the telephone that she merely had to follow the railway line from Quilpie to Charleville, and that should be quite enough to bring her back to her route again. She landed at Charleville just at dusk.

Next day we were due to fly from Charleville to Brisbane, landing at a place called Toowoomba, some 70 miles only from Brisbane. Toowoomba was a town of about 30,000 people, and I should think that the greater part of the town were on the aerodrome to welcome Amy. While she was being entertained by the Chairman of the Shire Council and the councillors there, I inspected her machine, as was my custom, and ascertained that she had plenty of petrol to complete her journey to Brisbane. Before we took off I spoke to her, and told her that there was sure to be an enormous crowd at Brisbane to welcome her, and would it not be better this time for her to land first to receive the plaudits of the crowd. Her reply was that I was to land first, as usual. On reaching the aerodrome at Brisbane my surmise that there would be a large crowd was correct, and there must have been between 20,000 and 30,000 people there to see Amy, though the aerodrome was some six miles out of the town.

She had the misfortune to crash her machine rather badly on landing, but luckily there were no

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spectators near, and I am glad to say also that she was not hurt.

Her whole flight was a wonderful performance. Allowances obviously had to be made at the end of such an ordeal. If she felt anything like I did later after a similar flight, she must have been in a highly overstrung condition.

I certainly owe Amy Johnson one thing, and that was the kindling to a greater pitch the enthusiasm I then had to attempt a long flight such as she and Bertie Hinkler had made. However, when one is in Australia and the flight is to be made from England to Australia there is a voyage of 13,000 miles home first and then the problematical journey by air to Australia. It is always a difficult business to save money, and although I was receiving a good salary for my flying services at the time, there was not a lot of surplus to finance such a venture.

Kingsford Smith was in England at this period, selecting a machine in which he hoped to break the now long-standing record of fifteen and a half days set up by Hinkler in 1928, and those of us who knew Smith knew that whatever he attempted would be thoroughly well organised and systematically planned to the last detail, and it is these details and plannings that are the foundation of success. I could only hope that this successful flight which Smith was to do in the near future would not put the record hopelessly out of reach for any who might attempt it after him.

CHAPTER XI

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST RECORD FLIGHT

In which I tell of my many weeks of hoping and thinking which culminated in my booking a passage to England with a view to flying back to Australia to take up my job again, how I was given the alternative of the flight or the job and chose the flight, how the exchange rate suddenly upset my plans, how my father came to the rescue, how the final preparations were made, and how at last on April 1st, 1931, I took off from Lympne Aerodrome for Australia.

I FOUND a man in Brisbane who was willing to buy an aeroplane from me if I delivered it to Australia. In other words, I had to purchase the machine in England and he would buy that same machine from me in Australian currency if I landed it successfully at Brisbane. He agreed that the purchase price of the machine, on arrival, by him was to be £750. This meant that anything over and above that figure would have to be found and financed by myself. At that time the Australian rate of exchange was approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Australia was still riding the crest of a boom period.

After Amy's coming and going I returned to the old routine of giving instruction, and each new pupil I had somehow or other seemed to be more

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dull than the one before, but my enthusiasm for a flight from England to Australia was at fever pitch, and I could think of very little else.

Long before Kingsford Smith left England on his record flight attempt I was in negotiation with the De Havilland Aircraft Company's branch office in Sydney for the purchase of a machine of a suitable type, and I had selected a machine which they had just then produced, namely, the Puss Moth, which was a small high-winged monoplane with a Gypsy 3 engine. It was to be fitted with tanks to give a fuel range of not less than 1,500 miles.

Soon after placing this order with the De Havilland Aircraft Company my own aircraft company in Brisbane purchased one of these new Puss Moths, and I was able to test for myself its performance, which I hoped would confirm the specifications and performances of it I had seen on paper. When the machine was lightly loaded I was very much impressed with its capabilities, but as soon as a very heavy load was placed in it, and particularly in hot weather, I began to doubt whether this was the ideal machine for my purpose, for some aerodromes on the England-Australia route in 1930 were far from being the excellent ones they are at this present time.

There was no doubt in my mind, and I knew I had to make a drastic change, so I asked the De Havilland Aircraft Company if I might change

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my order, and selected in place of the Puss Moth an ordinary metal Moth, a bi-plane, with a Gypsy 2 engine of 120 h.p. This machine was to be fitted for me with a fuel capacity for 1,800 miles. Although this machine was slower by some fifteen miles than the Puss Moth, I thought it would be better for my purpose.

Kingsford Smith left England at the beginning of October, 1930, and flew steadily and rapidly towards Australia. With my own plans for an attempt to beat the England-Australia record, I cannot deny that, although I wished Kingsford Smith himself no harm, I still hoped that he would not put the record down to such a low figure that I had no chance of breaking it myself. I had already planned my own flight from England for March 28th of the following year.

We all know that Kingsford Smith knocked Hinkler's fifteen and a half days down to just under the ten-day figure, and everyone said that it could not be reduced any more. All the carefully laid plans that I had made had to be drastically reviewed, for my schedules and my itinerary had been arranged to better Hinkler's time, and now I had this new figure to compete against.

I was given four months' leave, from the beginning of 1931 until the end of April, and in this period I hoped to voyage to England by boat, collect and test my machine, and land in Australia before the expiry of my leave period of four months.

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Although I had not informed the press or given any official information to my company of my project, it was a fairly understood thing that my leave period was to be spent in this way.

I booked a passage in the s.s. *Bendigo* that left Brisbane on December 30th, 1930. A week before my departure I was called into the managing director's office, who informed me at that late hour that he understood I was flying back to Australia, and this, he said, could not guarantee my return in time to take up my duties again at the end of April. He followed this up by saying quite bluntly that I could either take my leave, giving some guarantee for my return at the end of this leave period, and remain with the company, or, if I insisted on doing this flight, then he was sorry, but he would have to ask for my resignation.

I had spent a lot of money, made elaborate plans, and involved myself in many ways, but at the back of all my calculations I had had this one consoling thought that, if I was not successful in my venture, I at least had my permanent employment to return to. Now, at the eleventh hour this consoling hope was snatched from me. I tendered my resignation, for I did not mean to give up the prospect of fulfilling an ambition of many years, and left the service of the company I had been with during the whole of my stay in Australia. I sailed from Brisbane in the *Bendigo*.

By the time my ship reached Sydney there were

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upheavals in the money markets of Australia, and Australian exchange, which had been at about $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., increased to 5 and 7 per cent. By the time we reached Fremantle in Western Australia it had risen to 10 per cent, and on the short stretch between Fremantle and Colombo, i.e. ten days only, the rate of exchange was no less than 33 per cent. In other words, my money, which was all Australian, had depreciated by one-third, and all my commitments were in English currency.

I suppose most people imagine that all these record flight attempts have the backing of some influential and moneyed person. This, I think, is wrong, for it is very seldom that anyone who is not known, or publicly proven, can get any financial backing from an interested person. All the way home in that ship I was wondering how I would make both ends meet with this adverse exchange.

I reached Plymouth on my twenty-eighth birthday, after an absence of nearly four years overseas. What a grand feeling it is seeing one's native shore again! I only know one grander thing, and that is flying your own machine home from a great distance abroad. This experience and joy was to be mine a few months later.

Of course, my own people were aware of my undertaking, but were not fully informed of this new financial crisis, and I rather hoped that the De Havilland Aircraft Company would help me

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in some way over my difficulty. I went down to Stag Lane Aerodrome soon after my landing to see them and my machine, which was then ready for collection.

I had been thinking in terms of pounds, shillings and pence for many months, and it was with rather a sinking feeling that I interviewed the sales manager of De Havillands, for I knew that although the price of the machine I had ordered was a certain figure, this figure had increased proportionately for me by the sudden fall of the rate of exchange.

Before discussing with De Havilland's any business details and the question of financial settlement, I asked to be allowed to look at my aeroplane. I was taken down to a hangar by one of the De Havilland staff to view it. We went into a hangar where there were many machines, almost any one of which might have been mine, and my guide called out to somebody who was walking across the hangar: "Whereabouts is the two thousand-pound Moth?" My heart immediately dropped to my boots, for the figure I had arranged with De Havilland's for my machine was considerably less than this. I turned immediately and almost fiercely to him and said: "But two thousand pounds wasn't the agreed purchase sum." He looked at me for a minute and then burst out laughing. He said: "I didn't mean two thousand pounds—I meant two thousand pounds avoirdupois,



HIS MAJESTY THE KING SHAKING HANDS WITH CAMPBELL BLACK AT MILDENHALL, SCOTT STANDING ASIDE BY THE WINNING COMET. [Photo : Keystone.]

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for that is the category in which your record machine is issued with its certificate of airworthiness." I was rather shame-faced, but very relieved. I was pointed out my aeroplane, which carried the registration letters "G—ABHY." She looked lovely to me, and I peered into her cockpit and found everything that I had ordered in its place. Her extra tanks were all snugly housed, but she was faired in all points to give her an extra speed. After feasting my eyes on her I went back to the office to discuss the delicate financial difficulty.

Apart from the actual cost of one's aeroplane, there are many other costs in connection with a record flight attempt. Here are a few of them : Maps alone cost £40, passport *visas* and permits another £30, spares that have to be carried for the machine and engine can well and easily amount to a further £50. Fuel expenses in that year worked out at £120, and one must carry at least £50 in one's pocket. Insurance, if one insures one's machine, would be in this case another £100, and any premiums on an additional life policy would be about five per cent. These last two I decided to risk, and I carried the risk with my own insurance.

By borrowing £300 from my father, and haggling as much as I could with De Havillands, and receiving an unexpected piece of help of a sum not less than £120 from Messrs. C. C. Wakefield & Company, I was able to take possession of my

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machine and have just enough money to scrape through my own record attempt.

The route taken by Kingsford Smith on his ten-day journey to Australia was from London to Rome, Rome to Athens, and Athens to Aleppo. He took three days to do that, and I hoped, with my new itinerary to knock a day off this time by flying overland across Europe, chancing the weather conditions, and making one stop at either Belgrade or Sofia. I calculated that if I could have twenty-four hours in hand at Aleppo, and everything went well, I stood an even chance of bettering Kingsford Smith's time.

The tests of my machine were the ordinary experience tests and then full-load tests, and finally the consumption test. I reckoned that ten hours' consumption test would be sufficient, and for this ten hours I thought it would be a good idea to fly in the direction I was to take at the start of my journey to Australia, viz., over Frankfurt to Vienna, and return. I flew my machine to Lympne, and one morning, having cleared Customs, set out towards Vienna on this consumption test. Very strong head-winds blowing slowed my journey, and by the time I got to Frankfurt I had completed five hours' flying. Because I did not want to tire my engine before I started on the real trip to Australia I stopped at Frankfurt and flew back again the next day, and was able to get from

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this period of flying sufficient figures to determine my fuel consumption.

The start that I had planned for March 28th fully six months before seemed likely to materialise, and undoubtedly I would have left Lympne, Australia bound, on that day had it not been for the fact that a necessary permit to allow me to fly through Syria had not arrived. As it was, this permit not arriving until the afternoon of the 30th, I decided to leave at daybreak on the morning of the 31st.

I went to bed that night in a little hotel in Hythe full of queer thoughts and excitement. Somehow or other, the exhilaration and the enthusiasm of ever undertaking such a trip were lost in the sudden realisation of the task that lay ahead of me. Although I went to bed early I could not sleep, and the wind seemed to howl in a weird way down the street outside my window. Many times I got up during the course of that night looking for the stars and the moon, but on every occasion these were obscure, and I returned to my bed with thoughts as black as the night outside.

I particularly asked that no one should see me off. I wanted to leave quietly and without fuss and without witnessing the anxieties of my people, so at half-past three on the morning of March 31st I got into the taxi that I had ordered, and carrying with me a bundle of sandwiches and a clean shirt

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and shaving gear, I was motored to the aerodrome a few miles away. The wind was still blowing very strong, and on arriving at the aerodrome an hour before the time I hoped to depart, I went to the Meteorological Office there for a weather report for central Europe. Strong head-winds were to be experienced over my entire journey, and I was debating whether to postpone my start when my father walked into the office, and, hearing the news, decided for me, and I motored back to London. I could not help feeling during the whole course of that drive what an ignominious performance this was and what an inauspicious start. That same afternoon in London, I took farewell of my parents and got a train to Hythe again, for I said, although I was quite sure I would not leave on the morrow, I wanted to be there just in case the weather moderated. I remember reading my evening paper in the train going down, and noticed a small paragraph which stated that "Mr. C. W. A. Scott, who hoped to leave London this morning on a record attempt to Australia, has been forced to postpone his flight owing to bad weather."

The next morning at the same time, and after the same night of worry and anticipation, I motored out to the aerodrome again to find the same weather conditions prevailing, but this time the Meteorological Office there told me that, though I would have very strong head-winds as far as

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Frankfurt or Linz, there was every prospect of getting a tail wind from these points. I started my machine up and took off for Australia. April 1st is supposed to be All Fools' Day, but I defied the superstition.

CHAPTER XII

AUSTRALIA IN NINE DAYS

In which I tell of my first flight to Australia : how I had to battle against Sir Charles Kingsford Smith's record time, how I slept at Belgrade, Aleppo, Baghdad, Gwadar, Calcutta, Victoria Point, Palembang, Bima and Port Darwin on nine consecutive nights, how those great people in Australia welcomed me right royally and how I finally delivered my aeroplane as promised in Sydney.

AT 4.55 a.m., Continental time, I left Lympne, flying eastward into the dawn and leaving England in darkness behind me. My desire was to make the 1,132 miles to Belgrade by nightfall, for two reasons. First, Sir Charles Kingsford Smith, it will be remembered, reached Aleppo the third day out, travelling via Rome and Athens. If then I could reach Aleppo on the second day by going across Europe instead of round, I had a sporting chance of beating him. Bertie Hinkler, in setting the first record, made no rules other than that (1) the flight should be solo, and (2) the machine of the light aeroplane class. My second reason for flying to Belgrade was that Amy Johnson had made Vienna the first night out, and I felt it up to me to go farther.

I followed the Belgian coast to Nieuport, the wind blowing strongly from the east, and made

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Coblentz in four hours twenty minutes and Frankfurt in another forty minutes. I was then 360 miles from Lymgne. My course was over Darmstadt, and there I very nearly changed direction for Vienna, feeling it impossible to make Belgrade in the strong east wind. However, after I passed over Linz and had climbed to 5,000 feet to cross range of mountains lying on the way to Vienna, there came a lucky change of wind from easterly to strong westerly. My cruising speed thereupon rose from a bare 80 to 120 miles an hour. I taxed the machine to the utmost and made for Belgrade, crawling in after the sun had sunk. I worked for three hours in the aerodrome there, cleaning the crankcase, filters, plugs and magneto. On retiring I asked the hotel people to wake me at 3.30 in the morning ; but, mistaking my bad Yugoslav, they woke me at 1.30, so I decided to start work then.

I left Belgrade before daybreak and steered a course to Sofia over the mountains. These mountains had worried me much and I thought I should need good luck to get through ; but fortune was with me, and I made a course through the Dragoman Pass, flying over Sofia at 8 a.m. On the Turkish side of the Marmora Sea I encountered low mists and clouds, which remained over the tablelands 4,000 feet above sea level. I flew, seeing nothing for over an hour, and then suddenly through a "chimney" in the clouds discovered

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that I was just over the railway line that runs through Turkey to Aleppo. Battling with head winds, I met over the Taurus Mountains the worst weather of my flying career. I struggled for over an hour through flying snow and low clouds, my only possible guide the tiny pencil marks of the railway in the cleared land below me, cutting gorges and skirting hills. Eventually I struck the sea and steered for the mountains near Aleppo. It was getting dark as I cleared the mountains at 7,000 feet, and the moon rose and shone through the swollen masses of rainclouds round the peaks. Skimming the mountains a few feet over the tree-tops, I dived down into the valley where Muslimieh lies. I picked up the railway and followed it to an open field, where, more by luck than good judgment, I landed well. I walked to the camp of a regiment of Spahis and there spent the night, unable to get petrol or oil. The following morning I discovered that I had missed Aleppo by 35 miles, having flown the previous day 1,200 miles under the worst conditions imaginable.

At Aleppo a French squadron filled my petrol tank. Being then too tired and exhausted to consider another long day's flight I decided to make Baghdad my resting place for the third night. The 460 miles from Aleppo to Baghdad were thus all the flying I did on my third day, as I deemed it wise to conserve my strength for the thousands of miles ahead. On the way I met a severe dust storm

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which reduced visibility to a few hundred yards, but I reached Baghdad at about three o'clock in the afternoon. The remainder of the day I spent in overhauling the engine and preparing for the next day's flight, in which I hoped to reach Karachi, 1,700 miles distant.

At 1.45 a.m. I left Baghdad from the west aerodrome, and flew by night to Shaibah, at the head of the Persian Gulf. From there I followed the Gulf to Bushire, where I landed at 8 a.m., having covered up to then 550 miles. Forty minutes later I left for Karachi, expecting to arrive there three hours after nightfall. Now intense heat took the place of the snow and ice I had met earlier. I discarded coats and sweaters, and eventually flew in shirtsleeves and helmet. Between 2 and 2.30 p.m. I landed at Jask for fresh oil, taking off again at three o'clock, Karachi being then 570 miles away.

At nightfall I was still 300 miles from Karachi. Low clouds covered the hills that reached to the water's edge and the moon had yet one hour to rise. It was necessary to land and await moonrise rather than risk running into the hills in the mist. At this point I was over Gwadar, Baluchistan. I knew there was an aerodrome, but the gathering night made it impossible to discover it. I attempted to land on an open space, but on the wheels touching the ground the machine bounced twenty feet into the air. Only the immediate response of the engine saved me. I searched in

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the dark for another landing ground and, taking a chance, landed on a clearing, this time successfully.

This was Baluchistan. I had no idea whether the natives were hostile or not. Seeing tents pitched nearby I took a revolver from my kitbag and approached. I remembered sufficient Hindustani to ask for water, for my thermos had long since run dry. Water was immediately given and the flask replenished. A tame goat was also brought along and milked for my special benefit. These natives were evidently not hostile. Encouraged, I went back to the machine, hoping that the moon would rise and I could continue my journey to Karachi. As a precaution I looked at the petrol tanks, and discovered that a leaking cock had robbed me of twenty gallons. There was nothing to do but to wait for the morning, for there was not enough petrol to make Karachi.

Two small boys now arrived with a camel and by gestures intimated that I should mount. I was dead tired and nothing seemed to matter. I mounted, and rode where I was led. Instead of going to Gwadar, however, I was led in the opposite direction. I became afraid, but it was unnecessary, for they took me to a telephone in communication with Gwadar. From the telephone operator I discovered that a Mr. Martin was riding out to assist me. Soon afterwards he arrived on a camel, bringing food, water,

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and a bed. He told me that I could ride to Gwadar, $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles away, and sleep, or make shift and stay the night where I was. I had already ridden $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles on a camel, and the idea of riding to Gwadar appalled me, so I stayed where I was. To this man Mr. Martin I owe sincere thanks, for I personally would not ride $9\frac{1}{2}$ miles on any camel for anybody's succour.

After a miserably uncomfortable night I went back by camel to the aeroplane and flew to the aerodrome, where I put in petrol. Taking off again, I was over Karachi by 1.30 p.m., Middle Eastern time, thereby breaking Kingsford Smith's record to India by five hours. In the race against time I could not stop at Karachi, and so decided to make for Jodhpur, where I landed at dark. I was now 400 miles ahead of the record. I suffered much from the heat.

I left Jodhpur for Calcutta half an hour before daybreak on the following morning, the sixth day from England. All went well till I reached Gaya, 150 miles south-east of Allahabad. Here I was forced to land to repair a broken cowl, wasting half an hour of now valuable time. In spite of this I managed to reach Calcutta at dark, where attention was given to the engine. I went to bed at 10 p.m., to rise at 1.30 with the hope of reaching Victoria Point, 1,300 miles distant, at 7.30 in the evening.

This time I was almost completely exhausted

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and unnerved, and the departure four and a half hours before daybreak was trying in the extreme. There was a little moon and all went well until half an hour after leaving Calcutta, when, in the direction of Chittagong, I ran into mist which entirely obliterated the moon. I flew by compass, estimating the ground speed through the clouds. I suddenly flashed by a bonfire which, though I was flying at 5,000 feet, was level with my wing-tip. I realised then that the wind had carried me well over the mountainous region north-east of Akyab. I swung round to the south-west and dived down through the clouds.

Luck again. Under the clouds, the dawn just breaking, I was able to discern the vague shape of mountains. I passed over Akyab at sunrise, and flew along the coast towards Bassein. It was but a few miles from here that Hook and Matthews crashed on their way to Australia. The tremendous hills, tree covered, were wrapped in cloud and almost hidden from sight. I skirted their base and flew towards Rangoon, hurrying always against time.

Kingsford Smith on his seventh day reached Rangoon. I had to get on. I decided to attempt Victoria Point, 570 miles beyond Rangoon. Twenty minutes of precious time were wasted in searching for the aerodrome at Rangoon, which had been changed since I left Australia. I replenished there my petrol and oil, and took off

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for Moulmein, flying over the mountainous heights of Siam, which reached into the clouds. It was hot. I bumped my way south, struggling against the clock. Could I reach Victoria Point? But just as it grew dark I landed there. I was lucky to find a flight of aeroplanes from the Singapore base, and so get help in refilling and attending to the engine.

I was now 570 miles ahead of the record. On his eighth day Kingsford Smith flew 1,350 miles, and I had to beat that distance. I left Victoria Point at daybreak, and landed at Singapore at 2 p.m. Here I took on oil and departed almost immediately for Palembang, in Sumatra. Now the lead was reduced to 280 miles. Could I make Bima on the following day? Only by leaving well before daylight. I got to the aerodrome at Palembang next morning two hours before dawn, to find it shrouded in mist. It was too dangerous to depart. Could I even make Sourabaya that day? That would make me level with Kingsford Smith; but I had to go farther and make Bima.

At 8.50 a.m. I dived past the aerodrome at Batavia and went on towards Sourabaya, which I passed at 1.30 p.m., local time. It was 450 miles yet to Bima. Now it was a race against daylight. If all went well I could just manage it, but a heavy storm enveloped the mountains of Bali and Sumbawa. It was impossible to fly straight, and I had to go round their base. Daylight was fast

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going. I was 70 miles from Bima, after an hour's flying over the open sea, when the sun went down. Nothing but luck now could avoid a crash at Bima ; but luck was with me. I flew into Bima Harbour in pitch dark. I was uncertain of the whereabouts of the aerodrome, and, guided only by the dim shapes of the mountains, flew round and round in tropic darkness that grew each minute. I was now terrified that a crash would rob me of the record at the eleventh hour. The darkness was so extreme that I could no longer pick out shapes or outlines. The lights of a car induced me to attempt a landing. It was at the aerodrome. What luck ! Torrential rains during the previous day had rendered the ground unfit for use, and I landed in six inches of water in complete darkness.

I taxied to the car lights, but had great difficulty in making myself understood to the people there. For the tenth day, and last stage, of my flight I had 500 miles over the sea. It was essential to look to the engine, but the car lights were the only means of illumination. Taking a chance, I disregarded certain essentials, filled up with petrol and oil, cleaned the filter, and left the rest to luck. This ninth day had left me now 450 miles ahead. Could I complete the tenth day ? I was at the aerodrome at daybreak. There was just sufficient petrol to reach Darwin. I had to make four attempts before I got the machine into the air off

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the waterlogged ground, and I did not know if I could make Darwin on the petrol then left. There were 950 miles to cover with petrol for eleven and a half hours. I must have no head winds. It was impossible to get a weather report for the Timor Sea at Bima. I had to trust to luck.

I flew along the south coast of Flores at 3,000 feet, when suddenly the engine cut out twice, indicating that there was probably water in the petrol system. There was nowhere to land and still 500 miles of sea passage to make. What should I do? If I landed I could not break the record; if I went on I stood a chance of engine trouble. I took the risk. For the 120 miles from Flores to Timor Island I was over the water; there remained another 470 miles across the Timor Sea to Darwin. The first part, to Timor, I covered successfully, and then embarked on the most hazardous part of the entire flight—470 miles of open water.

It is impossible to describe my anxiety once I began on that stretch. The land was far behind; there was nothing but sea ahead. If the engine failed there was no hope. After nights and days of suspense and hard flying the Timor Sea was the climax and biggest effort. I estimated it would take me four hours from land to land. No four hours ever went so slowly. Minutes passed, then hours, and still there was nothing but sea all round. Looking over the side of the cockpit I could see

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the shapes of sharks, so for my peace of mind kept my eyes glued on the compass, set for Bathurst Island. After an infinity of time I saw land ahead. I refused to realise it and would not look for ten minutes. Then there was no doubt of it. I flew over land three hours and fifty minutes after leaving Timor. This sea was quite the most awful experience of my life. From Bathurst Island it was seventy miles to Darwin direct, but I decided to take a longer route of 120 miles, following the mainland coast. At 5.40 p.m., Darwin time, I landed at Darwin with a feeling of tremendous relief. I had broken the record by approximately nineteen hours.

The day after my arrival in Darwin I spent wandering happily about, conscious of only one thing, not that Kingsford Smith's record had been beaten by myself by nearly a day, but that my task was over and I could relax mentally and physically. Every now and then I caught myself saying to whosoever was near me: "My God, I'm glad it's all over!" For the strain of those previous nine days had been about as much as I could cope with.

Telegrams and cablegrams continued to pour in, and I got a tremendous thrill out of each and every one of them. London newspapers, which had previously shown disinterest when I wanted to try and raise money through them to help finance my flight, now sent messages asking for exclusive



[Photo : Keystone.

SCOTT AND BLACK WAVING GOOD-BYE AT ALLAHABAD TO CONTINUE THEIR RECORD-BREAKING DASH TO AUSTRALIA.

"We took off from Allahabad in trepidation and with a full load, on what must be the worst stage of the race."

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stories and offering various sums of money. Although I was no richer financially at that time by the success of my endeavour, I was so elated mentally that money meant nothing, and I turned all these offers down—all except one newspaper. That is the story I wrote immediately after landing.

I rested, or tried to rest all that day, and left Port Darwin for Camooweal on the Sunday morning. What a relief it was to be flying over land again, and how incredibly far away seemed the Timor Sea and all the other sea stretches of my recent journey. Although the first few miles from Darwin is over bad country from the point of view of the aeroplane and pilot, it is like a paradise compared with the sea stretches that had so recently been passed over.

After flying about 450 miles I landed at a little place called Anthony's Lagoon, where I knew a man living at the homestead. He was terribly pleased to see me, and unearthed from some hallowed recess a half bottle of whisky that he had. This we proceeded to drink together until the middle of the afternoon, pledging each other's happiness and prosperity. I only waited until the contents of the bottle were finished, and then said, "Au revoir, I must get on to Camooweal now," and we went out to start up my machine. Looking into the cockpit to see that the switches were in the correct position, I was immediately

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aware of the greenest frog I have ever seen sitting in the middle of my seat. To say that I was astounded is the least of it, and for a moment wondered whether it was the effects of the now empty whisky bottle, but then realised that this frog must have boarded my aeroplane from the water-logged aerodrome at Bima in Soembawa, three nights before. I always imagined until that time that the Australians were a tough and untimid people, and, hating frogs myself, asked my friend to remove it from the seat of my cockpit. Doug Cotton (which was the name of my friend at Anthony's Lagoon) recoiled in horror at my suggestion, and we quickly arrived at the conclusion that we had a mutual dislike for these things. We had to get a cowman, who apparently was not quite so fastidious, to remove the offending creature. I arrived in Camooweal at six o'clock that evening.

It will be remembered that when Bertie Hinkler landed in Camooweal over three years before, a party had been staged there in his honour. Now to-night the party was staged in my honour, and how I loved it, and meeting all the folk of Camooweal, whom I had got to know so well during my period as pilot on the mail run to these little places. Everyone made speeches and everyone was happy, and the little post office in Camooweal was kept open all night by one enthusiast who sent verbatim reports of every-

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thing that was done and said that evening to the capital cities down south.

I left for Longreach the next day, where my welcome was as large, I think, as that accorded to Amy Johnson, who passed through there under my escort not a year back. I was entertained at the Longreach Club and had to stand on a table in the bar to make my speech, and I think I realised at that moment how easy speech-making is when you have the good wishes, and the good fellowship, of all the people you are speaking to, for no matter what one says under these conditions, it is received with acclamation. There was a large dinner party in Longreach, too, that night, and I went to bed with the knowledge that I was in for a heavy day in Brisbane the following afternoon.

On my journey from Longreach to Brisbane I missed out Charleville and went direct to Toowoomba, thereby saving 100 miles of the 700-mile journey. There was what I considered an enormous crowd there. My arrival at Brisbane had been officially timed for four in the afternoon. During my absence from Brisbane (three and a half months ago) a new aerodrome had been opened up on the south side of the city and I was the first overseas pilot to land on Brisbane's new municipal airport.

I arrived punctually to time and was received with much pomp and ceremony. I was carried shoulder high from my aeroplane and felt not a little foolish and uncomfortable. I was stood on

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a dais gaily decorated with bunting and flowers, and made my first public speech through a microphone, and was bundled into a car and driven out of the aerodrome, through masses of people who swarmed on the running-board and over the back of the car—all of them trying to shake my hand. I was even carried away with their enthusiasm, and my right and left arms were quite sore with all this pump handling. The new aerodrome was eleven miles from the centre of the town, and the entire route was lined with people. Policemen mounted on motor-cycles went ahead, and the car I was in was the head of what seemed a never-ending procession.

They had erected in the back of the car a little hand-rail for me to hold on to, and I stood up on the back seat holding on to this bar with one hand and waving to the crowd with the other. Girls were throwing bunches of flowers at me, and I remember one bunch of roses in particular because it was flung with such force, and, hitting me in the face, nearly knocked me from my precarious perch. Every time I saw a particularly attractive girl in the crowd, I would throw her a flower from the masses that were then strewn all over the conveyance in which I was riding. We would round a street corner when suddenly, in the shape of a pleasant surprise, a brass band would strike up a popular tune and welcome me further towards the heart of Brisbane

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city. We journeyed the entire length of Queen Street, the principal thoroughfare of Brisbane, with all other traffic at a standstill and trams stationary on their tracks. It was almost incomprehensible to me that I had ridden so often in these same trams over penny and longer stages, and now, by comparison, I was in the van of a triumphant procession. We journeyed in this way to the Brisbane City Hall, where I was again officially received by the Lord Mayor, and made my way with him to a platform from which the speeches were to take place. The organ, I remember, played "See the conquering hero comes," and I felt unutterably foolish and self-conscious, for I was an outstanding person by appearance only, amongst that crowd. I was still dressed in my flying kit, and my hands were very dirty and my face still a brilliant red from so much sitting in the sun, and still smoked by the fumes from my exhaust pipes. Everyone seemed to make speeches, and I answered all these when my turn came.

It must be confessed that I enjoyed it all, but at the same time was longing for a bath and a rest and quietness. That first evening in Brisbane will ever be remembered by me, for it was planned with Australian thoroughness which gave me not a second's rest. From the City Hall I was taken to Lennon's Hotel, where a well-known firm of outfitters had new and clean clothes for me to

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get into. Press reporters and photographers interviewed me, even in my bath, but fortunately the latter perpetrations were never published. There was dinner at the hotel, and I remember we all did a lot of toasting. After dinner, which was rather a hurried meal—as I had so many engagements that evening to fulfil—I was rushed away to make an appearance on the stage at one of the Brisbane theatres. This, I imagined, was going to be rather an ordeal, for I had never been on the stage with the footlights on before, but when I had been introduced to the audience by the stage manager and to the entire company on the stage behind me, all fear of nervousness vanished, and I was able to play my part of speech-maker successfully simply because of the enthusiastic attitude of my audience. I was rushed away from the theatre to a broadcasting station, where I was supposed to make a speech of twelve minutes that was to be relayed throughout Australasia. I was very worried about my ability to speak as long as twelve minutes.

When we arrived at the Broadcasting Station there was still seven minutes to go before I was due to talk, and I pleaded forlornly with the manager there to curtail my speech to three minutes. I said I did not know what to say; I seemed to have said already so much. But he said: "Say it all over again; they won't mind hearing it." I said I would do my best, but I

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asked: "Wouldn't it be possible for someone to give me an occasional whisky and soda, which is supposed to loosen the tongue, and also keep me supplied with lighted cigarettes while I was standing in front of the microphone?" This he promised me would be attended to. In a very short time I found myself standing in front of the little black-boxed microphone. After an introduction of, "Well, you people of Australia, here's Scotty himself," I started. It may have been the whisky that was occasionally thrust into my hand, or it may have been the fact that I lost my nervousness, or that I got quite enthusiastic over relating my experiences, but I seemed to go on talking quite easily and freely for what seemed a long time. Suddenly somebody plucked at my arm and whispered: "I say, could you cut it down—you have been talking over forty-two minutes already." My first wireless broadcast lasted in all fifty-five minutes, during which time I spoke without notes of any description.

At this point it is rather interesting to remember an occasion, about two months after this particular episode, when I had to speak for twelve minutes from the London broadcasting station of the B.B.C. The B.B.C. insisted on having my manuscript for editing four clear days before the date of my broadcast. This I submitted to them nicely typed, but kept a copy for myself. A quarter of an hour before I was due to speak

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on the air on that occasion, I presented myself at the B.B.C. House, Savoy Hill, to discover that the B.B.C. people had lost, or mislaid, my manuscript, and were all in a fever of excitement about it. I suggested that I might be allowed to speak without notes, but that, I was told, was impossible. Consternation reached fever pitch there as the zero hour approached, but I was feeling perfectly happy with my own carbon copy in an inside pocket. When the officials there appeared to be too worried to stand any more, I informed them of the copy which I had in my pocket. They were immensely relieved. What a difference between the B.B.C., London, and the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

But to return to the night of my arrival in Brisbane three years ago. From the first broadcasting station I was whisked away to another, and spoke for another quarter of an hour there, and then hurried away to a dance that was being given in my honour. I was allowed to retire to rest at three o'clock in the morning, at which time I was so tired I could scarcely stand.

The six weeks I spent in Australia, with the exception of one week, were given up to much the same sort of programme—lunches, teas, dinners, dances, theatres and entertainments all the time, and though one would have loved them had they been spread over a longer period, they were very tiring squeezed into such a short period of time.

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I remained in Brisbane for five days before departing to the south for Sydney, and on the afternoon of one of those five days was let off social duties to go and play golf. Of course I had no golf clubs with me, but the "Pro." lent me his own bag and, as he handed it to me, pulled out a hickory-shaft mashie, saying at the same time, "This is my favourite club." Because I had been flying for such long periods recently my eyes were affected, and although I was able to keep my eye on the ball there was no co-ordination at all between hand and eye, and I played the most miserable game of golf possible. My bad play was made even worse by the gallery that followed us around, and my consternation reached breaking point when I committed the unspeakable error of breaking the "Pro.'s" hickory-shaft mashie in two. I crept back to the Club House expecting to have all the other shafts broken over my head, but popularity is a wonderful thing, and the "Pro." laughed heartily when I told him of my offence.

Sydney gave me a wonderful welcome. Even though I had timed my arrival for a Saturday afternoon, which meant that the police officers who would normally have been on leave that afternoon had to be recalled, these policemen were just as friendly as the crowds who were there to greet me.

I left my machine in Sydney with the De

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Havilland Aircraft Company there, to have all my long-range tanks and extra instruments taken out, so that I could complete my part of the bargain, and hand over my little aeroplane to the man who had promised to buy it so long before. In view of the fact that he paid me in Australian currency the agreed figure of six months before, I found myself again financially worse off by the transaction, but a bargain is a bargain, and the fall in the rate of exchange was merely my bad luck, though good luck for him.

I had no aeroplane now. As the one I had brought over was being re-conditioned, I flew to Melbourne as a passenger with Kingsford Smith, who, by the way, greeted me in Sydney with that sporting attitude which is so particularly his. We were great friends, and another record flight that I made to Australia a year later, which was eventually beaten by him, was just the completion of the other side of the equation.

CHAPTER XIII

AUSTRALIA TO ENGLAND—THE SECOND RECORD

In which I tell of the hazardous flight which brought me back to Lympne again after only two months away : how in a weak moment I let myself in for what I had vowed to myself never to do again, how I had to battle against a monsoon storm near Alor Star and violent head winds for thousands of miles westward from Calcutta, finally reaching England some two days under Kingsford Smith's record time.

IT was in Melbourne one night after a party, and I suppose all parties have an exhilarating effect, that I was asked if a machine were given to me would I fly back to England from Australia, and try and break the record in that direction. It was late and I was tired, and to avoid any argument I said, of course I would ; this, in spite of my avowed determination at Port Darwin, on arrival, never to undertake a flight of this nature again. I went to bed unaware of the influence that sentence of mine was to have. At nine o'clock the following morning I was rudely awakened by my questioner of the night before, who thrust a cablegram into my hand, received from London, informing him that an aeroplane was to be purchased and placed at my disposal for an immediate return flight. To

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say that I was flabbergasted is the least of it, for I was definitely unfit physically. I explained that I should have to leave Australia very soon if a record flight was at all possible, in order to avoid the monsoon rains of Burma and India that start punctually at the beginning of June.

Of course, all these were merely excuses in an attempt to evade a direct issue, but they were all swept aside by the people who wished to back my return flight. They immediately got into telephonic communication with Sydney, and asked De Havilland's there how soon they could produce a machine for me to fly home to England. In view of the fact that they had all the tanks which had been taken from my previous machine and all my instruments, it was merely a matter, they said, of fitting these tanks and instruments to a new machine, building a set of wings and tail plane and rudder, and fitting to a fuselage an engine they had in stock. They said that the machine would be produced ready for flight in three weeks' time.

If I was able to get away punctually in three weeks' time it would mean that I should have to leave Sydney for England, somewhere about May 20th, and I had no alternative then but to agree to fly this machine back to England.

My nervous and physical qualities were impaired, there was no doubt about it, and I contemplated this return flight with great misgivings,

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for anyone who has not had experience of a long fast flight will hardly realise the strain and the natural reactions. Had I been allowed to rest after my arrival in Australia I should have been in a far better condition, but all these parties and evenings had given me no rest at all, so I insisted that I be left alone to prepare myself physically for this homeward flight.

I returned to Sydney. On arrival there I was made an honorary member of the Royal Sydney Golf Club, and took up residence in their lovely club house at Rose Bay, one of the loveliest spots round Sydney Harbour. I stayed there for ten days, playing golf morning and afternoon, going to bed early and getting up early for exercise before breakfast, seeing no one, and drinking nothing. What a relief all this was. Quite suddenly I seemed to be given a new-born confidence that increased each day, as careful living and good exercise renewed my physical strength and mental vigour.

I would sometimes go to Mascot Aerodrome to see how my machine was progressing, and shortly before she was due to be handed over to me I took a third trip to Melbourne to call at the head office of the Shell Petrol Company in connection with my supplies of spirit for the home journey.

I returned to Sydney, and was pleased to see my machine taking shape rapidly. My aeroplane had been built in the De Havilland Aircraft

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Company's hangars. There were two hangars, in one of which another machine was being built for a man named Mollison, who was also going to attempt a record flight to England. I had known Mollison for many years—actually he was one term junior to me at my original flying training school at Duxford. His period of service had taken him to India, but we had met again in Australia on many occasions, and he was at that time a pilot flying for Kingsford Smith's company, the Australian National Airways.

It was very amusing the way I would walk down to watch the progress of his machine, and question him about it. He would always, in reply to my question as to when he would be ready, answer, "Oh, not for weeks yet," and when he came up to see how my machine was growing, he would receive exactly the same reply from me. Of course, we both knew that the other might be ready daily.

The record at that time stood at twelve days twenty-three hours to England. This was put up by Charles Kingsford Smith and his crew in the "Southern Cross" when they flew to England in 1929. Either I or Mollison, whoever got off first, had a comparatively easy figure to break, hence our mutual anxiety as to who would be ready to kick off first.

On May 20th I took my Gipsy Moth up on its first test flight, and as everything seemed pretty

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good, I flew her over to Richmond, a Royal Australian Air Force Station, to swing my compasses on the compass base they had there. This done, I returned to Mascot prepared to leave the next day.

In England, with my previous machine, I had done consumption tests and full-load tests, and all the other necessary tests, but while there I had time to spare and could do all these in a leisurely manner. Now in Australia, I was trying to get past Burma and India before the bad weather really broke, so I decided to curtail all these tests and do them as I went along on my two thousand five hundred mile journey to Wyndham in North-Western Australia, from which place I hoped to kick off to England.

I left Sydney on the twenty-first and flew to Brisbane. On the twenty-second I was flying towards Longreach when a union in my oil delivery pipe broke, and I force-landed at a place called Mitchell. There I effected temporary repairs and went on to Longreach, where the workshops of my old company, Qantas, carried out a proper repair. There is nothing so distressing as trouble with one's oil supply, and it was with some misgiving that I left Longreach to fly to Camooweal and Wyndham, and so to England.

My flight to Camooweal was uneventful, and I stayed the night there, but on leaving Camooweal on the morning of the twenty-fourth I had to

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return after quite a short flight as I had more oil trouble in my delivery pipe. Camooweal being only a tiny bush town it was a very difficult matter fixing this knotty business, but I left Camooweal on the morning of the twenty-fifth and arrived at Wyndham that afternoon.

To be quite honest, I was frankly dreading my trip over the ocean again, for there have been lots of better men than I, that have got to the ocean edge, and, their courage having failed them, have gone no farther. On the morning of the twenty-sixth, a Dutch three-engine Fokker was due to leave Wyndham *en route* to Batavia. As this machine was fitted with wireless I thought I would cross the sea with them, so that in the event of my having to descend into the sea, they would at least be able to wireless my position and help might be forthcoming. I left in their company at five o'clock on the morning of the twenty-sixth, but not before I had telegraphed to Sydney, to Messrs. Wakefield & Company, whose machine I was flying, that I was not at all happy about my aeroplane. Their reply was: "If you are in any doubt at all, please return to Sydney." I think I only needed this small impetus to send me off.

It was just after daybreak in the grey of the early morning when I took off, slightly ahead of the Fokker that was to be my companion over the ocean, but it was broad daylight when we made our departure from Cape Londonderry and set

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G-ACSS

[Photo: "Topical" Press Agency.]

SCOTT AND BLACK IN THE WINNING COMET LANDING AT LAVERTON, MELBOURNE.

"Any successes I may have had have been through the inspiration of such great men as Bertie Hinkler, Kingsford Smith, Lindbergh and a host of others."

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a course over Timor Koepang, five hundred odd miles away. We had a fine tail wind, but the sea below us looked terribly angry, and I was quite aware that had I to land my machine could not have floated a minute, and that I would soon be drowned, but somehow the sight of this other machine gave me confidence. They were perfectly happy, of course, because they had three engines and could fly on any two of them. I was often out of sight of them, for their speed was greatly in excess of mine, although they throttled back considerably for my benefit. After what seemed an eternity I saw the grey line of mountains of Timor Island. I left my escort then, and steering a course a little more to the westward flew to Sumba Island, two hundred miles farther on beyond Timor.

Between Sumba and Lombok Islands there is a stretch of water about 150 miles across, and having passed Sumba I steered to this next island on my way towards Sourabaya.

I was still some fifty miles from land when, on glancing over the fairing of my cockpit at my bottom main plane, I discovered these were running with oil, which could only mean that there was some defect in my oil delivery or return system. To say that I was frightened would be a very poor description of my feelings. That fifty miles between me and land seemed an endless period, but I made a good landfall, and the

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aerodrome was only a few miles away. With unspeakable relief I landed, and without even taxi-ing to a tiny shed in the corner of the aerodrome, switched off my engine to examine what supply of oil I had left in the sump of my engine. The oil level did not even come up to the bottom of the dipstick. In other words, if I had had to fly a few miles farther my engine must have seized through lack of lubricating oil. I soon discovered the reason for the loss of oil.

The sump of a Gipsy II. engine normally carries two gallons of oil. This is amply sufficient for all ordinary flights with normal tanks, but as my machine was fitted with tanks to give it a range of normally 1,800 miles, I carried additional oil in a small tank fixed to the engine-bearers lying inside the cowling alongside the engine sump. This auxiliary tank was connected to the sump by an ordinary copper pipe. This copper pipe was taken from the bottom of the auxiliary tank at a right-angle bend, and was joined to another copper pipe leading to the engine sump by means of a rubber-tubing connection and ordinary hose clips. For some reason or other, the brackets holding my auxiliary tanks to the engine bearers had fractured, causing this tank to drop a few inches inside the engine cowling. This meant that the connecting copper pipes, between it and the sump, did not lie squarely, so that the rubber connection had undue strain thrown on it, and

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actually broke, and I lost all the oil in my engine. Had this happened a few miles farther out to sea, I would not be in a position to write this now.

This breakage was most unfortunate, as I was on a record flight to England, and Lombok, although an extremely pretty island, offers little in the way of repair facilities. The repair that I did make was only very temporary, and I had to stay there for the night and fly to Sourabaya early in the morning to get proper repairs made. All this caused great waste of time, and I only got as far as Batavia, at the western end of Java, on the evening of my second day out from Australia. This was too bad. Naturally, my arrival in Batavia coincided with the arrival of the Dutch Fokker that had been my companion over the Timor Sea. This Fokker, by the way, had been on an experimental flight from Batavia to Sydney and Melbourne and return. It was a great feather in the cap of the K.L.M. Services in the East Indies with its successful conclusion, and a large party was being held on the Batavia aerodrome in honour of Moll and Pattiste, the two Dutch pilots of the machine.

Actually I arrived at Batavia aerodrome some fifteen minutes after they had landed, and when I got out of my machine and walked towards the hangar, where a large crowd was assembled, I saw both Moll and Pattiste, whom by this time I knew quite well, sitting on chairs in solitary

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honour with laurel wreaths around their necks. Moll particularly looked very unhappy, and I laughed and winked at him, but he was too self-conscious even to smile. Behind this dais of honour, at the back of the hangar, were two long tables, and when the speeches were over the curtains guarding these tables were withdrawn with due ceremony, and I saw to my delight that they were loaded down with bottle after bottle of champagne and glasses.

Everybody except Moll and Pattiste had forgotten the poor English aviator homeward bound, in their excitement and enthusiasm of welcoming their own two compatriots, but these two, gripping me by the arm, introduced me to a bottle of champagne immediately, but there is no doubt that champagne in the middle of a hot afternoon is not at all good for one. I went to bed that night wondering if I would ever wake in the morning. I was out at the aerodrome, however, long before daybreak, and just as dawn was breaking left the aerodrome in fine rain, bound for Singapore, 700 miles away, where I would refuel, and to Alor Star, where I hoped to get that night.

Leaving Batavia, one flies towards the Sumatran Post Line and one passes very close to the little Island of Krakatoa, in the Sunda Straits, which erupted so violently in the last years of the nineteenth century that it caused the death of

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thousands and the loss of tremendous property. The sound of its eruption is reported to have been heard 8,000 miles away.

The part of Sumatra that one flies over is the mangrove swamps on its northern shore, and you can almost smell the hot tropical vegetation when you fly over it. Queer mists form and sometimes completely obscure the ground, though the actual depth of these mists may be only thirty to fifty feet. Imagine how dangerous this would be if one were trying to fly towards the ground and one did not know that this mist merely covered the tree tops. After flying as far north-westward along the Sumatran Post Line as the Palembang River, one turns more to the northward, to follow the chain of islands to the island of Singapore. I landed at Singapore after an uneventful flight, refuelled, and had lunch at the Royal Air Force aerodrome there.

How different this return flight was from the outward bound one. I was familiar with all the aerodromes, and people who before had not heard of Scott, now had, and gave me all the assistance I needed, and looked after me, where before I had to fend for myself. My machine was practically taken away from me on this occasion in Singapore, and a flight-sergeant and a fitter and rigger started to refuel it and go over my engine and aircraft. Wireless messages were sent ahead to Alor Star to expect me at half-past five in the

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evening, and at half-past five I arrived at the aerodrome there. This aerodrome, by the way, is one of the best on the England-Australia route.

After refuelling at Alor Star, again assisted by natives and white men, I was taken away in a motor-car with my grubby kit-bag, and driven to the local club and introduced to the members and the Resident Officer there. We sat down and drank our chota pegs. It seemed hardly possible, with all this ease and freedom and lack of worry, that I could be in the middle of a record flight to England. How different it was to my outward dash to Australia! I spent the night at the Guest House, after dining at someone's house (whose name I forget), having made what I hoped were suitable arrangements for a motor-car the following morning that would take me to the aerodrome, four miles away. However, at four o'clock the following morning there was no sign of my motor-car, and I had not the faintest idea how to get in touch with a car at that early hour of the morning. After having a shower and dressing, I put my alarm clock and my pyjamas, etc., in my kit-bag, and slinging this over my shoulder walked those weary miles to my aeroplane. What a fine way to begin a day's hard work!

I arrived at my machine just as dawn was breaking, and was immediately aware that the weather, which had been so fine the previous

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afternoon, was giving way to very different conditions. Great black cumulus clouds towered heavenwards and low-lying cumulo-nimbus clouds lay directly in the path of my journey. These, I thought, are the forerunners of the monsoonal rains I might encounter any day or any hour. I took off and set my course for Rangoon.

After flying for an hour, I was forced to descend lower and lower as the cloud base got nearer and nearer the ground, and soon I was approaching what appeared to me to be torrential rain. Everything ahead of me looked so black and terrifying that I left the western coastline of the Malay Peninsula, along which my course lay, and steered eastward in an attempt to circumnavigate this storm, that was now accompanied by vivid flashes of lightning. I must have flown at least fifty miles out to sea in an attempt to get round this storm, and at one point was flying not more than twenty-five yards from the rain that was beating down on the ocean and churning it to white foam, whilst I, though so close to it, was not touched by even as much as one drop of rain. It looked so violent and so devilish that I scarcely dared enter the rain area, but taking my courage in both hands I climbed up to about 150 feet (I had been flying with my wheels just over the sea), and put the nose of the machine timidly into this rainstorm. No sooner was I in it, than I was soaked to the skin, and I felt my machine being literally forced

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down to the sea beneath me. I quickly turned and flew out of the storm again, for it was utterly impossible to fly through it.

Again I skirted this storm and made my way back to the coastline. After two and a half hours' flying I found that I was back at Alor Star, which I had left that morning. I thought of landing and waiting for conditions to moderate, but just then I saw a hole in the storm over a valley in the hills to the eastward.

At this point the Malay Peninsula is not very wide and I wondered if weather conditions might be better on its eastern shore, so I opened my engine out full and flew at top speed towards this valley and this hole in the storm. On reaching the valley I saw it was raining on either side of me, but there was still clear weather ahead, and, taking a chance in perpetual fear of getting closed in, which would have been almost fatal in this hilly country, I shot across to the eastern side of the Peninsula, to discover to my relief and amazement that the sun was actually trying to pierce through the black clouds of this monsoon storm. I turned northward again and flew along the east coast of Siam and Malaya. If I did not actually get towards Rangoon, which was my objective, I was certainly flying towards Bangkok, and if the worst came to the worst, I could always land there and wait for a break in the weather.

After a few hours of calm I decided to climb

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and fly through the storm, over the mountains to the westward of me, and I calculated that after flying some distance west I could descend and find myself over the sea by the Bay of Bengal. This I proceeded to do, but it was not necessary to fly blindly down to the ground, for the storm cleared or, rather, I had reached its northern limits and I had clear weather the rest of the way to Rangoon. All this had taken time, and on arrival at Rangoon I found there was insufficient daylight to fly on to Akyab, where I had hoped to get that night. I stayed at Rangoon in the bungalow of some kind people who put me up. Strangely enough, I met these same people in England two years later, but only for such a short time that I was unable to repay, as I should have liked, their kind hospitality to the dirty, grubby flyer who descended on them that night. My host took me out to the aerodrome on the following morning and I took farewell of him with much regret.

I arrived at Calcutta about eleven o'clock in the morning, where I refuelled and had something to eat. I remember that this meal consisted of bread and butter and a tin of sardines, which last looked particularly repulsive in the morning heat and sun of India. I left Calcutta at about one o'clock, hoping to reach either Allahabad, 400 miles away, or Jhansi, a further 200 miles, that night.

The afternoon, I remember, was grey but hot,

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and there was a lot of dust about, but as the sun did not appear to be shining I discarded my topee and flew bareheaded. When passing over Asansol I flew into a miniature cyclone. Imperceptibly I was aware that my ground speed was decreasing, and gradually the head wind, which I suddenly encountered, increased to terrifying force, so that my speed over the ground was reduced almost to nil. I think the wind must have been blowing nearly ninety miles an hour, for the trees that I could see on the ground were bent until their upper branches appeared to touch the ground. The bumps were terrific. Gradually the storm passed me, and as I reached the other side of it the head wind gave way to a tail wind, and I was soon flying over the ground at a terrific pace. I estimated, by visual observation, that my ground speed at one point could not have been less than 160 miles an hour.

Afternoon heat always makes one sleepy, particularly if one has not been having very much rest at night, and I began to get very drowsy and also discovered that I had a headache. This headache got worse and worse, and then, too late, I realised that flying bareheaded, even though the sun had not been shining, had given me sunstroke. I began to get giddy and I had visions of myself fainting in the air, so I immediately throttled my engine back and decided to land at an aerodrome, or rather a small forced-landing ground, that was

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beneath me at a town called Gaya. I landed and taxied to a corner of the aerodrome, got out of my machine, and collapsed. I must have rested for at least an hour and a half or two hours under the wing of my machine before I felt sufficiently capable of getting up and attending to business. All this time I had been the centre of a jabbering crowd of natives, none of whom seemed sufficiently interested in my predicament to offer any assistance or to speak to me, but I should probably not have been able to understand them. When I did get to my feet I asked them for water in my best Hindustani and this was given to me, but I could not get any of them to tell me where I could get in touch with a white man. The sun went down and it began to get dark, and I was still alone and unattended on the aerodrome. Just when I had visions of having to spend the night on the ground, when I really needed a good night's rest and some aspirin or something to relieve a headache, a Chevrolet truck was driven on to the aerodrome and two white men appeared. They were operators at the Gaya wireless station, and had heard that a machine had landed on the forced-landing ground, and had come out to see if it was me. Heavens, how thankful I was to be able to talk intelligently in my own language to my own people again! They took me to the wireless station and I went straight to bed and slept.

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Normally, a day's flight begins before the sun is up or, at the latest, at dawn. On this occasion it was nine o'clock before I appeared, and I hurried out at once to my aeroplane, for I was supposed to be making a Record Flight home to England. I discovered that I had a strong head wind and, in fact, I had to battle against this strong head wind for the next 3,500 miles of my journey. In view of my late start, all I could possibly hope to do that day, against this head-wind, was 750 miles, to Jodhpur. That seven hundred odd miles took me no less than eleven hours steady flying, but I dropped down at Jhansi aerodrome to put my head in a bucket of water. I still had a violent pain in my head, and my arms and legs were strangely stiff. I landed at Jodhpur an hour and a half before dusk.

It must be remembered that when travelling westward one's daylight hours are longer than if one were to remain in the same place. Conversely, on my outward trip to Australia, my daylight hours, through travelling eastward, were reduced, so that whereas outward bound I had a great deal of night flying to do, homeward bound I had very little. I left Jodhpur the following morning for Karachi and Jask, or perhaps even Bandar Abbas.

I left Jodhpur by moonlight because I wanted to reach Karachi by the time the offices opened there in the morning, for I had been unable, while I was in Sydney, to procure the necessary permit

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and visa to fly over Persian territory. This I hoped to be able to procure at the Persian Consulate in Karachi. Friends of mine met me on the aerodrome, and drove me straight away the fourteen odd miles into Karachi town, and there I presented myself at the offices of the Commissioner-in-Sind, and asked his assistance in obtaining my Persian permit. He advised me to go straight away to the Persian Consulate, and this I did. On arrival there with my passport, I asked to be allowed to see the Persian Consul at once, and was told to sit in a small ante-room. There I sat for twenty minutes and, receiving no attention at all, asked again if I might see the Consul. I was told to take my seat and wait. I waited in that Consulate from half-past nine in the morning until half-past twelve, each hour representing a distance of nearly 100 miles of my journey. When at last I did see the Persian Consul, a little fat man, whose signature I often look at on my passport, he merely picked up a rubber stamp, stamped my passport, and signed his name. Surely it should not be necessary at any consulate in the world to have to wait three hours for such an act of officialdom.

It was not before two o'clock in the afternoon that I was able to leave Karachi and continue my flight westward along the Persian Gulf. I still had a bad head-wind, and I suppose my speed over the ground could not have been more than sixty miles an hour. All hope of reaching Jask had

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gone, and I spent the night at Gwadar, in Baluchistan, again at the same funny little corrugated iron-roofed hut where I had had the strange experience on my outward journey. I was well looked after though by the Afghans or Baluchis there, but I slept with my pistol under my kit-bag, which I used as a pillow. I left Gwadar at day-break for Basra or Baghdad.

The head-winds that I had been encountering ever since I left Calcutta still continued, and my progress over the ground was terribly slow.

On reaching Jask one reaches the Gulf of Bandar Abbas. This is a large indentation on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf. If one cares to fly directly over the gulf, across the sea from Jask to Lingeh, one saves seventy miles by that journey, instead of following the coastline to Bandar Abbas and then to Lingeh, and because I had this strong head-wind I steered a course over the 120 miles of water.

I was flying along quite serenely at a height of about 3,000 feet with the happy knowledge that every mile passed was one mile nearer home, and I was actually reading one of Mark Twain's books, or it might have been one of H. G. Wells' (I had a volume of each author with me), when I was suddenly aware of a curious disturbance in the water. I gave this my fullest attention, and was horrified to see that this disturbance was caused by perhaps fifteen or twenty enormous

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sharks that were attacking some object floating on the sea. This spectacle gave me such a shock that I immediately thought I detected some unevenness in my engine, so I hurriedly turned and flew back to the nearest land. In the end I followed the coast-line all the way round the Gulf.

The heat of the afternoon along the Persian Gulf is very severe and I fed myself at frequent intervals with caffeine and whisky. These I found the best things to keep me awake. The lower I flew, the greater the heat, the higher I flew the less the heat but the greater the head-wind, for wind invariably increases with height, so I flew low in extreme discomfort in order that my progress might be a little quicker. I landed at Bushire and after a short rest departed for Basra, at which place I hoped to spend the night.

I had had a very tiring day battling against head-winds over the 1,100 miles from Gwadar, and I wanted to rest, but instead of going to my room and having a meal and sleeping, I enjoyed so much the company and society of the officers of No. 84 Squadron who had official authority that "all assistance and facilities should be offered to Mr. C. W. A. Scott in the event of his landing at their aerodrome" that I sat out on the Mess veranda talking and chatting until it was time to dress for dinner. I had rather imagined that I would be allowed to dine in their Mess in the only suit of

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clothes I had with me, but Mess formalities were not to be broken down like that, and I borrowed black trousers from one person, Mess jacket from another, and all the necessary collars, ties, socks and shoes, so that I actually appeared at dinner properly clothed for the first time since I left Australia. Towards the end of dinner I was so tired I could hardly keep awake, and with great difficulty I managed to keep my eyes open and continue a polite conversation with the Commanding Officer, next to whom I sat.

Before going to bed, I asked that a wireless signal be sent to Baghdad saying that I would breakfast there the following morning, and would it be possible to instruct Flight-Lieutenant Montgomery, who, it will be remembered, was with me in my old Squadron and with whom I had been winter sporting in Switzerland, that I should be at Baghdad West Aerodrome at eight o'clock and would he take breakfast with me. Montgomery was at that time stationed at Baghdad. This signal was despatched, and, sure enough, when I landed at Baghdad the following morning there was Montgomery to greet me, and off we went to breakfast together.

From Baghdad to Aleppo the distance is about 500 miles and from Aleppo to the next aerodrome at Athens, 800 miles. As it was impossible to get as far as Athens that day I could only hope to reach Aleppo that evening, so that I was not



Photo: "Euphrat" Press Agency.

SCOTT AND BLACK IN THE COMET "GROSVENOR HOUSE" WIN THE MILDENHALL-MELBOURNE AIR RACE.

"I dived landwards and went staggering across the finishing line."

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actually wasting time when I stayed at Baghdad
until two in the afternoon.

I spent the whole morning with Alec and I remember we were walking through one of the dirty little streets of Baghdad when he suddenly turned from me and, with an apology, walked into a little shop we were then passing. He came out and handed me a small parcel, which on opening I found to be a cigarette case, which was Alec's small gift to me. I thanked him profusely and asked to be excused also. I went into the shop and bought Alec something or other and handed it to him on the pavement. I suppose he must have considered that my gift was more expensive than his, for into the shop again he went and produced another gift for me. I, considering that the sum of his two gifts was in excess of the one to him, went into the shop to make a further purchase for Alec, and he in his turn bought me yet another gift. The Arabs in the shop were getting just as much excited as he and I were, and I do not know to what limit we might not have gone with this mutual exchange of presents had we not burst out laughing and decided that our time could be much better employed by going to an hotel and drinking our morning beer. We had an early lunch and were joined at luncheon by a man called Swish Riddle, whom I had known for some time and who was a cousin of poor old Kit Denison. I left Baghdad and flew to Aleppo.

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The aerodrome at Aleppo used to be at Muslimie. This was about eighteen kilometres outside the town. In view of this great distance between the aerodrome and the hotel, the Frenchman who met me on the aerodrome asked me if I would stay the night on the aerodrome, and when I said I should be very grateful if a bed could be found for me he went to great pains to discover whether or not I was an officer. I suppose the subtle social distinction was to determine whether I should go to the officers' or the sergeants' or men's mess. Having assured him in my best, though very vile, French that I was an "officier," he took me to the officers' mess and told me that I could use the bedroom of an officer who was then on leave. Dinner, he said, would not be for two hours yet, so I thought I would sleep until the hour of the meal arrived. I lay down on the bed, having removed nearly all my clothes and set my alarm clock to give me a sleep of an hour and a half, but there was no sleep for me at that time, for after lying on the bed for only a few minutes my whole body suddenly appeared to be a mass of little red splotches that itched terribly, and I knew that there were other things in or on that bed besides myself! Why is it that in that part of the world, in Turkey and Asia, vermin are so numerous?

At the hour appointed I went into the mess for dinner and was rather surprised to find only three officers there, but each officer had lady guests, and

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also there were a number of children. As this was my first visit to a foreign squadron mess I was somewhat surprised, but it appears that it is quite normal for ladies to be present in the mess, at any rate in French ones. They had a funny little bar in the corner of the ante-room cum dining-room, and in front of this very high bar were a number of very high stools. On to these we all climbed and sat down to have a cocktail. I should think the height of these stools could not have been anything less than five or six feet, and one climbed to the summit of them by the rungs across the legs. When asked what I would have to drink, I said I should like a whisky and soda, and was given a drink that tasted like nothing I had ever drunk before. When everybody had finished their drink, we all had another and I was given another so-called "whisky." We then had another, and I believe a fourth, but this concoction, whatever it might have been, somehow or other had gone to my head and I was terribly giddy and still six feet from the floor. Of course the height of the stool I was sitting on was accentuated by my intoxicated mental condition, but I considered that at that moment, and even now, this was one of the greatest feats of my life to climb successfully to the floor. Whatever else one had to do, one tried to preserve a national dignity. But I slept well that night in spite of the vermin, and I suppose I must thank the "whisky" for the rest.

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The next morning I set off just after daybreak with a full load of petrol to fly to Brindisi, 1,300 miles away. There was a range of high hills to be crossed between me and the eastern end of the Mediterranean, over which I was to fly, and, with my big load of petrol, it took me a wasted forty minutes to get sufficient altitude to cross these mountains, which were cloud-covered. Once over them, though, I was able to throttle back and dive down through the clouds to the blue sea of the Mediterranean in the Gulf of Adalia. Practically all the flight to Brindisi is over water. First, over the Mediterranean to the Island of Rhodes with occasional headlands not far to the north, and then 300 odd miles over the Ægean Sea, but by the time I got to Rhodes my head-wind appeared again and my speed over the sea was terribly slow. No pilot I know likes sitting in his aeroplane many hours a day, but to sit for a long period and fly so slowly over the ground is a heart-breaking job. I had had head-winds all the way from Calcutta, thousands of miles back, and I was heartily sick of them.

I had elected to fly from Aleppo to England via the Mediterranean route owing to the bad weather conditions I had encountered when I took a Central Europe route on my outward trip to Australia, and this was the first time I had been over this part of the world.

Athens, I left a few miles to the northward, and

Australia to England—the Second Record set a course for the Gulf of Corinth. I passed over the short canal hewn through solid cliff and so to the Gulf of Corinth, whose south shore I skirted. Then, bearing off to the northward, I worked up towards Corfu, through the mountains, and steered a course from that island to Otranto in the south of Italy. That trip over the Adriatic of only seventy miles seemed to be terribly long, and I was battling against a very strong north-westerly wind, the sea was very angry and there were no ships. However, I reached Italy safely and, turning to the north, flew into Brindisi.

Somehow or other I felt I was nearly home. There was only 1,400 miles between me and England, and after all Italy never seems very far away from our own country. I could have spoken by telephone to those at home if I had wanted to do so.

The Italians in the aerodrome were terribly nice to me, and one little Italian in particular did me the honour of superintending all refuelling and servicing of my machine. I could speak no Italian, and he did not understand French, but we got along quite well. They must have read in some newspaper that I had once upon a time done a certain amount of boxing, for this tiny Italian suddenly assumed a fighting attitude and pretended to hit me in the ribs. I immediately dubbed him "Carnera," which delighted him and his companions. I met this little man a year later and

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he still remembered the name I had called him, and was still as helpful and as kind on that occasion too.

I stayed at an hotel in Brindisi that night, and sent a telegram to London saying that I hoped to arrive at Lympne at six o'clock the next evening. I had my own private bathroom in this hotel, and I cannot describe the luxury of that hot bath, and the clean sheets and comfortable bed after so many queer nights spent previously. I had arranged for a taxi to call for me at three o'clock the next morning.

At three o'clock I was pacing up and down in the hotel lobby trying to advise the hotel porter of the taxi's non-arrival, and there followed a conversation, which would have been comic if it had not been serious for me. I had so set my mind on reaching England that night yet I saw all promise of arriving to schedule disappearing with the non-arrival of my conveyance to the aerodrome. The night porter and I talked and gesticulated, neither of us understanding the other, for more than an hour, when a very dilapidated old Fiat arrived and I transferred my attentions to him. All that I said to him would not bear printing, but he understood not a word of it, and solemnly bundled me into the car and drove me to the aerodrome, where he extracted an exorbitant fee for his services. In no time I had packed away my belongings in the machine and started my engine, and was off on the last of my flight to England and home.

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How lovely it was in the Italian sunshine of that early morning flying over vineyards and olive groves, and over the green slopes of the Apennines, towards Rome and Pisa, for I reckoned to cross the Gulf of Lyons from this point to Cannes. *Mirabile dictu* there was no head-wind to-day. Actually, it was flat calm, and I flew over the sea at about twenty feet, singing all the time. The sea did not worry me to-day, for I was wonderfully happy with the knowledge that each mile flown brought me nearer to home. I reached a point where I was 1,001 miles from England, and then quite suddenly the distance was reduced to 999 miles. How much nearer that last figure seemed.

Arriving over the French coast-line I steered a course over the hills for Lyons and the Rhone Valley.

Of course, I had no maps of France with me, for the set which I had used on the outward trip were of the course through Central Europe. Although I had been able to procure Admiralty charts in Sydney, which were very good for the journey from Aleppo to Marseilles, I had no maps at all for the 600 miles over France, but I reckoned on the old "homing" instinct and did not think I would go wrong.

An extraordinary thing happened. The flat calm gave way to wind, and the wind was directly on my tail. It was the first tail-wind I

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had had for ages. How I did welcome it, speeding me on towards England !

I was approaching a district in which I imagined the city of Paris to lie, when the horizon ahead of me began to assume an ugly look, vivid flashes of lightning cut the sky, and the rain started in earnest. I flew into one of the worst rain storms I had ever encountered in Europe. I was flying quite low down when I saw the Eiffel Tower, and passed over Le Bourget aerodrome. The weather looked terrifying, and when I passed over this aerodrome red Verey lights were fired from the ground. I somehow connected these lights with the weather and imagined they were an indication for me to land or a warning to me of very bad weather ahead, but no matter how bad the weather was it would have had to be appalling to have stopped me on that last lap to England. I flew at nought feet all the way, soaked to the skin and blinded with rain, wiping my goggles continuously with my gloves and handkerchief in order to see anything at all. I passed Beauvais and Abbeville and shot on to Cape Gris Nez. Now only the width of the Channel separated me from my own home-country.

The visibility was so bad that I was flying at ten feet over the sea, but I was singing and shouting and offering up prayers of thankfulness all the time. The white cliffs of Dover were not white that evening—they were shrouded in low clouds

Australia to England—the Second Record

and rain, but no land ever looked so good as the land of England or any village so pretty as the village of Hythe as I passed over them and followed the road up the hill to the aerodrome, along which I had been driven in a motor car two months before.

I was just able to land on Lympe Aerodrome, as the clouds were not quite down to its level. As my wheels touched the ground I felt almost like bursting into tears, but I looked at my watch instead and found it was exactly six in the evening and that, by a fluke, I had arrived as punctually as a train.

There was a large crowd of Press photographers and reporters on the aerodrome, and they were all very pleased that I had come to schedule, as they had all doubted whether I could fly through that weather at all.

After sitting in an aeroplane, whose engine has an open exhaust, for thirteen or fourteen hours one becomes terribly deaf, and so it was when I landed at Lympe that evening. Everybody was asking questions at the same time and trying to talk louder than the next person. I could hear none of them at all, and therefore could make no reply. My machine was pushed in out of the rain on to the clean hangar floor, and I remember how the rain dripped from the wings and the fuselage making puddles on the concrete of that clean hangar, and I remember, too, how tiny she seemed all alone in

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the vastness of that hangar, built to accommodate the largest air liners.

Commander Deacon, who was then in charge of the aerodrome at Lympne, waved off all the Press and took me into a little private room and produced a bottle of whisky and said, " You had better have some of this just to keep out the cold." While in this little room I asked him if I could clear Customs and proceed that night to London. He said that instructions had been received to the effect that I was not to land in London until three o'clock the next afternoon, when the Minister for Air would officially receive me. Incidentally I had broken the second of Kingsford Smith's records by well over two days.

I telephoned my people in London, for by this time I was able to hear again, and I remember that my father himself answered the telephone, and when he heard my voice and I told him I was at Lympne he almost shouted over the wire, " You young devil ! " which I thought was a particularly nice way to receive me, for I noted the relief and the snapping of the tension in his voice.

I went out into the hangar and made peace with the Press by answering all their questions. I stayed the night in Lympne, and the following morning at breakfast had all the daily newspapers, and proceeded to read all they said about me with great conceit. What a waste of time it seemed having to spend all that morning loafing round,

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for I was not due at Brooklands until three o'clock in the afternoon. I left Lympne in plenty of time to keep that appointment, and flew over my old aerodrome at Kenley and, in spite of all my recent successes, wished that I were still a serving officer there.

Lord Amulree welcomed me at Brooklands, and everyone, including myself, seemed to make speeches. All my family were there, and suddenly there appeared by air Lord Stonehaven, who had been the Governor-General of Australia and whom I had piloted on the long taxi flight in that country. He asked me to go over to Hanworth to a party there. He arranged for all my own folk to be transported there by air, too, and the aunts and uncles, fathers and mothers and brothers all left by air for Hanworth. At Hanworth that afternoon there was no less a person than the great Bleriot himself, with the machine in which he had crossed the Channel in 1909. It was very funny to see this machine of his in contrast to mine. His epic flight had been twenty-five miles, and my own little machine had just completed over 13,000. His machine was clean and spotless and my own bore traces of its journey. Driving back into town that evening, the newspaper placards carried notices: "Scott's welcome in London." I was terribly pleased and terribly happy.

The week after my arrival in London I was kept very busy.

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One incident in that crowded week after my arrival was the occasion when I visited my old school at Westminster. I had never been a particularly bright scholar there. In fact, Kit Denison and I had always held the two bottom positions in every form we were in, and I should not have had the temerity to make the suggestion I did had I not received anonymous letters from many of the school-boys there. These letter all ran something like this :

Dear Mr. Scott,

In view of the fact that you are an old Westminster boy, and have just achieved a great deal of publicity and fame, don't you think it would be a good idea if you came along to the school and asked the Head for a holiday for us ?

Actually I wrote to the head master, who replied that if I would come along and "put a play" in the approved manner he would be delighted to give the boys a "play" at my request. Half holidays or whole holidays at Westminster are called either "half plays" or "plays."

I presented myself to the head master's study at Westminster in much the same way, I must confess, as I would have presented myself there during my school days, for it is strange how customs linger in our minds. My fears in the head master's presence soon vanished, and we went together "up school," where I was to ask for the "play" at

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prayers that evening. I remembered so distinctly the old “up school” hall at Westminster, for all the boys of the school are arranged in rows according to form, and at the head is a half-circle of chairs on a dais, where the school monitors sit. The masters are lined down the aisle in the centre of the hall, and the head master sits in the middle of the half-circle on the dais. For the first time in my life I sat on the dais where the head master sat, and prayers commenced.

Although it was twelve years since I had been at school there at Westminster, when the Latin prayers started some distant chord in my memory awoke and I discovered that I knew them all without having to turn to the Prayer Book, “*Omnipotens sempiterne Deus . . .*” They all came to me without hesitation or thought. When prayers were over the head master, Dr. Costley-White, informed the school that a “play” had been granted to commemorate the world’s record of one of their old school-fellows. The clapping and the cheering were terrific, and I wondered, and still do, whether it was because of the “play” or because of me. I think most probably the former.

Soon after this I did an aerial tour of Britain for the London newspaper, the *Daily Herald*, with Hannen Swaffer as my passenger. It was, of course, a form of publicity campaign, and, according to the paper, I was out to discover the youth of Britain. I was not quite sure what this meant,

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but I know that my job was to fly Swaffer to various parts of England and Scotland, and each evening appear at either a theatre or a music-hall or cinema and make speeches. There were civil functions, too, at most of the big cities where we called.

Before we started on this tour I have to record the fine gift of Lord Wakefield of Hythe to me. He presented me with the little aeroplane that had made my homeward record possible. In exchange he asked if I would give him a photograph of myself. What a magnificent man he is to all of us, and where would I, or Amy Johnson, or Mollison, and many other people be were it not for his kindness and interest?

My tour of Britain was quite uneventful, and I remember it mostly because of my passenger, Hannen Swaffer. What a remarkable man he is to be sure! Although I do not see eye to eye with him in many things, one cannot meet him and remain unimpressed. He is certainly far better than any gramophone, for with any gramophone that I have had I have always had a limited number of records. Hannen Swaffer's anecdotes were always different, and he could certainly tell a very pretty story about anything and everybody. Each day he would report to his newspaper the impressions of the towns we visited, and these I would always read the following morning on publication. Some of them I thought were good, some I thought were very good, but there were certainly some I

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thought equally bad. This tour of ours lasted just over a fortnight, by which time my record flights to and from Australia were engulfed in other items of world news, which took their natural precedence, and I was at liberty to return to a quiet and normal life again.

CHAPTER XIV

THE THIRD RECORD

In which I tell of my second flight to Australia from England to try to beat Butler's record : how I had to delay my start until April and had no luck until I reached India when a spanking tail-wind came to my rescue, how I met old friends along the route, all of whom were wonderfully kind and helpful, how I thought I had missed the continent of Australia altogether and how I finally arrived at Port Darwin six hours ahead of Butler's time.

IT will be remembered that while my own machine was being built in Sydney, a machine was being built at the same time for Mollison in the hangar next door, and one day I read that Mollison had left Sydney for Port Darwin *en route* to break my record to England. I had previously warned Mollison that the Port Darwin aerodrome was not a good one to start a record flight from owing to its small size and the fact that he would have to take a big load out of it, but he flew to Port Darwin to take off for Sourabaya. I had told him the aerodrome was small, and this he found to his cost, for he crashed on his take-off and his machine had to be shipped back to Sydney for repair, and he had to start all over again. On his second attempt he emulated my example and flew to Wyndham, and, taking off from there, broke my



[Photo: "Topical" Press Agency.]

SIR MACPHERSON ROBERTSON, ORGANISER OF THE MILDENHALL-MELBOURNE
RACE GREETING SCOTT ON HIS ARRIVAL.

"Sir Macpherson is a great patriot and a man of imagination."

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record to England fairly comfortably. Thus I lost one of the two records I held. A few months later a man named Butler, flying a machine certainly faster than the one I had used, broke my record from England to Australia. He broke it by only one hour and forty-two minutes, but this represented an increase in speed of just one minute per 100 miles, so that in those few months I, who had held simultaneously the outward-bound and the homeward-bound record to and from Australia, was now without any at all, and I felt my prestige had gone. When Butler was successful in taking my outward-bound record, I publicly announced that I would set about recapturing it the following spring, and I made plans for yet another record flight attempt to Australia.

It will be remembered that Lord Wakefield presented me with the aeroplane which I used on my homeward flight from Australia, and I thought that it would be rather nice to show my appreciation of this gift and use the same machine again in my attempt to regain the England-Australia flight record. I therefore returned this machine to the De Havilland Aircraft Company for a complete overhaul and for preparation for this next attempt. Quite frankly, I thought that I had put the England-Australia flight record at its lowest possible point for this particular type of machine, as I could not help but draw a comparison between Butler's bettering my time by a mere 102 minutes, using

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a machine fifteen miles an hour faster than my own.

It all came down to a question of physical endurance. As far as is practically possible, I was certain of my machine completing the journey and standing up to almost continuous flying, but there are definite limits to the strain one can impose on one's physical abilities and to take even a few hours off the 10,000 mile journey was quite a hardship unless helped by exceptional weather conditions and exceptionally good luck. Everything would have to be favourable at the start, for it would be stupid to start and cover little ground on the first two days. Full moon, of course, was a great assistance, and when my machine was handed over to me, and after I had tested her, I decided to start on March 19th in the spring of 1932. I flew from Stag Lane to Lympne, hoping to leave for Australia the following morning before day-break.

By a strange coincidence Mollison was also flying to Lympne that same morning from Stag Lane, and he hoped to leave at the same time as myself on the following morning, but he was bound for Cape Town and I for Australia. That evening we walked together along the sea front at Hythe and noticed the sea mist rolling up over the land. Because we had several hours of night flying to do after leaving Lympne, we both wanted good weather conditions before we set off, and

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we anxiously watched the night, but never saw either stars or moon. We were out at the aerodrome at 2 a.m., however, with the hope that conditions might be good away from the coast, in which case we would both have started. There was a small crowd in the aerodrome to see our departure.

Bad weather always looks very much worse than it is at night, and it certainly looked black and bad enough for us that early morning. Without even bothering to push our machines from the hangar we got back into our motor-car and went back to bed. All that day there was fog and light rain, and the next day, too, and I saw visions of my own particular flight being postponed for a month, as the moon was already on the wane. A waning moon was not so important for Mollison, as his journey was only a little more than half that of mine.

The following morning the placards in the streets of Hythe bore the words, "Famous Airman's Romance," and I bought a newspaper and showed it to Mollison at breakfast as he was the airman concerned.

He left Hythe and stayed mysteriously away all day, and in spite of bad weather conditions prevailing, left for Cape Town the following morning. Publicity of this romance of his was too much for him, and he sought the security of the air and escaped.

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I postponed my own flight and returned ignominiously home, saying that I would start some time in April.

On April 19th I actually justified my announcement of again contesting the England-Australia flight record, for I left at four o'clock in the morning bound for Brindisi, which place I hoped to reach before nightfall that same day. I remember vividly what a cold and cheerless morning it was, and although there were no stars to be seen one could just see the gleam of the moon through the low lying clouds. My last glimpse of England was the red neon light of the Lympne Aerodrome. The sea looked black and cold, but the shore lights of France welcomed me on, and I passed over Paris shortly after daylight.

At this point I said to myself, "What a fool I am. Why couldn't I let well alone and still be sleeping comfortably in my bed in England instead of embarking, as I am, upon another tremendous task, which might lead me heaven knows where?" It is quite an appalling thought—undertaking chance work of this nature.

The Meteorological Office at Lympne had warned me that there would be fog and low clouds between Paris and Lyons, and sure enough, just after leaving Paris, I ran into very bad weather. As I was not certain how far this bad weather would continue, I tried to keep below the clouds and in sight of the ground, working my way southwards along

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railway lines and roads. Had I fallen blind through the clouds and attempted a descent through them, when I estimated I was over the Rhone Valley, it was quite possible that I might have collided with a cloud or fog enshrouded hill. Following this road and that and railway lines, and finally a canal which led me eventually to the low country of the Rhone Valley, I came upon gloriously brilliant sunshine, which I felt augured well for the success of this new venture.

Lyons was passed and Avignon, and then Cannes, and over the Gulf of Lyons towards Corsica. I passed Cape Corse (the northern point of Corsica) seven and a half hours after leaving Lympe. Most ships take seven and a half days from this point to London river! From Corsica I flew to Rome and then through a valley in the Apennines to the Adriatic coast-line of Italy, and so to Brindisi, completing the first leg of my journey to schedule.

My old friend of a year ago, the little Italian whom I had called "Carnera," was still at the aerodrome, and we shook hands and greeted each other with much effusion. He immediately took command of me and my machine, and asked me what I wanted to eat. I only wanted a glass of milk, and he produced almost immediately a quart of this, and was not satisfied until I had drunk the whole lot. I left the aerodrome for the town and spent the night at the same hotel that I had used

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a year previously. Up early the following morning, I taxied out to get into a position to take off, but in the half-light of that early dawn I taxied into a soft patch of ground and my machine became bogged. Minutes were precious, because whatever else one should or should not do on a record flight one must always make one's landing before night-fall has set in, owing to the fact that most aerodromes on the England-Australia route are unilluminated. I had 1,300 miles to go that day, and when travelling eastward one's daylight is obviously reduced. We were half an hour getting the machine out of this bog, and then I was on my way.

The Adriatic this time was smooth and unruffled and the smoke from steamers rose almost vertically in the air. I passed Corfu and flew up the Gulf of Corinth, finally heading over the Ægean Sea for the Island of Rhodes. A hundred miles from Rhodes a head-wind sprang up, and I had visions of not reaching Aleppo that evening, as I had planned. After 300 miles of head-wind, however, I ran into a period of calm, and decided that I would take a chance and pass Nicosia, Cyprus, the only aerodrome between Rhodes and Aleppo, even though I was cutting my daylight rather fine. I flew into the town of Aleppo when all the street lamps were on, but a moon just rising, and I landed by moonlight on Aleppo Aerodrome.

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My next day's itinerary should have taken me, according to schedule, to Jask, in Persia, a distance of about 1,500 miles. I left Aleppo at midnight to make my arrival at Jask possible, if normal weather conditions prevailed, before dark that night. Half an hour after leaving Aleppo, however, I ran into a terrific dust storm and visibility was reduced to absolutely nil. All that I could possibly see was a straight shaft of moonlight, lighting up a piece of water on the ground below me and, anxious lest I should lose my way over Iraq, I circled round and round this little oasis, which was, in reality, of course, a large tract of water, until daylight, three hours ahead. Then, when I could distinguish faintly the shapes of trees, I went on towards Baghdad. I soon realised that I was in for a rough day's flying, for I had another terrific head-wind, and I did not reach Baghdad until ten o'clock that morning. In other words, I had taken ten hours over a 500-mile journey. You could only just see across Baghdad, the dust was so thick, and in spite of the dust it was terribly hot. I remember one of the aerodrome officers at Baghdad telling me that the anemometer on the aerodrome had registered a gust of eighty-four miles an hour that morning. This was not, of course, the mean speed of the wind, but it was obvious that I was up against a wind of great force.

All hopes of reaching Jask that day were lost but I still thought I might reach Bushire, so I

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left as soon as I had washed the sand out of my eyes and ears and nose. Never have I had such a tiring day, flying through this dust storm against a terrific head-wind over Iraq. At six o'clock that evening, after eighteen hours' flying, I arrived at Bushire, having covered only 780 miles in that time. I was miles behind my schedule, and terribly disheartened and sad and weary—I had to rest.

One of the big Imperial Airways liners kept on sending signals through from Bushire, saying that the wind and sand made a postponement of its departure imperative and it would not leave Bushire until conditions moderated. This struck me as amusing, in view of the fact that this liner had four engines and had a tail wind, while I had one tiny engine and a terrific head-wind.

At two o'clock the next morning I left for Bandar Abbas, 250 miles away. I was uncertain in my mind whether to abandon my flight or not, for I was so far behind my schedule. That 250 miles took me five hours' flying, but at seven o'clock I landed in Persia, to clear Customs during my transit through that country. I left as soon as possible to get as far as I could. I ran out of the sand and head-wind 100 miles on, and for the rest of the day flew in an atmosphere of no wind but in terrific heat. I wondered if I might get to Karachi that night after all. I landed at Jask at about two o'clock in the afternoon, and asked

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them to signal Karachi that I might be there after dark, and would they have the aerodrome lights on. However, as darkness was approaching low clouds appeared and a sort of Scotch mist, and I decided that flying through this in the dark would be too dangerous, so I landed at Gwadar, in Baluchistan, again. It is strange how I never seemed to be able to get past Gwadar in any of my trips.

I had had nothing to eat all day and was very hungry, and because of my early start from Bushire I had taken no food or sandwiches with me. There seemed to be none on the aerodrome at Gwadar either, which aerodrome is, of course, fourteen miles from the little town by a tract over which only camels can operate. There was no one but Afghans and natives on the aerodrome, but what was there was a shed belonging to Imperial Airways. This was padlocked with a large padlock. I intimated to one of the natives that I was hungry, and he in turn intimated to me that there was food in the shed, but I pointed out to him the size and solidity of this padlock, for I was sure that he had no key. I intimated that I would like to get into the shed, and in no time he had this padlock unfastened, using something that resembled a meat skewer. Once inside I found cases of tinned food, which were emergency rations of Imperial Airways. I remember I selected a tin of sausages, and left a receipt in

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the open case. We locked the door after I had eaten them, and I have not as yet received an account from Imperial Airways for the tin of sausages that I stole that evening. I left the following morning as soon as I could see for Karachi, where I landed to clear Customs for India.

The aerodrome officer at Karachi is a man called Watts, who lives in a bungalow in a corner of the aerodrome with his charming wife. I had got to know them quite well, and they immediately rushed me off there, and I had a lovely bath and breakfast.

All the previous night at Gwadar, sleeping on an old camel blanket, I had been planning new schedules to make up my lost time. Quite frankly I could not see how I could break the record to Australia. The only thing that determined me to continue my flight was a metal propeller that I had had fitted to my little Gipsy Moth, gleaming in the moonlight. I suddenly remembered that I owed Fairey's a bill of £10 for this. They had let me have it at this price because I said I would try and put up a good show; obligations are awkward things. Now at Karachi this morning I reckoned I would be lucky if I could get to Jhansi, 700 odd miles away, by nightfall, so after breakfast I bade adieu to the Watts family and set off towards this place, having previously sent a signal to say that I would spend the night there.

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Shortly after leaving Karachi, though, I discovered that a slight tail-wind was with me, and climbed high. I soon found that I had a spanking wind on my tail, and the Sind desert was soon passed, and Jodhpur, and I realised then that I would arrive at Jhansi an hour and a half before dark. I could not afford to waste that hour and a half, and I thought I might by chance be able to reach Allahabad before it got actually too dark to see land. Every minute was precious, but I knew also that Allahabad would not be warned of my arrival, so as I neared Jhansi I wrote a message on a piece of paper and put it into a cigarette tin, tying the whole lot into my handkerchief. I determined to throw this overboard as I passed over Jhansi aerodrome, with the hope that the people there would advise Allahabad of my possible arrival.

Soon after leaving Jhansi my-tail wind diminished and faded utterly away, and I was nervous lest I should arrive at Allahabad when it was too dark to see to land. Actually I arrived over Allahabad aerodrome when I could just see the outline of the flying ground. Of course, my message had miscarried or had not been received, or if it had been received it had not been transmitted, and I sat round Allahabad aerodrome for three hours waiting for petrol and oil. These eventually came, and also the representative in India of Messrs. C. C. Wakefield and Company.

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How the arrival of that man altered the complexion of things. Natives, who had hitherto been idle, soon jumped to activity at his word of command. My machine was refuelled and picketed for the night, and this man, whose name I forget, drove me at once the six odd miles into Allahabad town to the Guest House, where I spent the night. What a fine Guest House that was, too, for I had a fan in my room and my own bath, and a marvellous meal of curry, which was immediately forthcoming. And furthermore did Messrs. Wakefield's representative assure me that he himself would be responsible for getting me out to the aerodrome at any time I wished on the following morning. It seemed such a poor way of repaying his kindness to ask him if he could possibly take me out at two o'clock in the morning, but instead of being upset at this break in his night's sleep he was more charming than ever, and told me that I could sleep soundly, and he would still be responsible for my rising and my transport to the aerodrome. Because of him I was away early, and breakfasted in Calcutta at eight o'clock that morning.

While I was at breakfast a French machine arrived, homeward bound. It had just come in at that time from Akyab. I asked the pilot what the weather was like along the route. He said "good," and that I would have a tail-wind. Rangoon was my objective, nearly 800 miles

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away, and if I should arrive there before nightfall and do another good day's flying on the next day, I would still be in the running for the England-Australia record. Not only did I reach Rangoon that night, but also I covered 1,500 miles the next day, to Singapore. I was in such a position then and there, that, barring engine failure, I must break the record to Australia. I celebrated this by sending cables home and to Australia.

I wanted to reach Lombok the next day and if I could get as far as that there was no reason why I should not reach Australia the next day and recapture my old record by a handsome margin.

What a different complexion the last few days had put on my flight. All my troubles of the Iraq desert, sandstorms and head-winds were past. My only anxiety now was that my engine might fail me, for I knew I had the physical resources to complete the last 3,000 miles of my journey. I left Singapore by moonlight at three in the morning.

I did not get to Batavia until nearly eleven because I ran into head-winds again, and only reached Sourabaya that night. I was to get nothing but head-winds now until I reached Port Darwin.

Even from Sourabaya I could have reached Port Darwin in the day, for I knew that they would light the aerodrome for me, but as Port

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Darwin is the one spot of civilisation in the north-west of Australia, and had I missed Port Darwin in the dark my fate would have been equally as bad as if I had fallen into the sea (there is no water and no vegetation and no life for hundreds of miles on either side of Port Darwin), I decided to fly merely the 800 miles to Timor Koepang, and leave there at such a time as would enable me to reach Port Darwin at daybreak the following morning.

Head-winds from Sourabaya to Timor Koepang made the journey of 800 miles a twelve-hour flight, but I arrived safely there, only 520 miles of sea keeping me from my objective. Again the dread and fear of that sea crossing overcame me. To say that I was frightened of it is to say the least, and when I left Timor Koepang at midnight I did so with prayers in my heart and mind.

Soon after I had taken off low clouds began to form over the sea, and it was unsafe to continue flying low, so I climbed up into the moonlight above, with this layer of white between me and the sea. Somehow or other there seemed security in these clouds, but only because they hid the terror of the sea beneath. I had no means of checking my speed over the sea as this was hidden from me, nor had I any idea of wind speed or direction as I was able to make no observations.

The first light of dawn seemed a long time coming. When it was daylight I throttled my

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engine back to glide through the clouds, hoping that, at the best, I might even be over the land of Australia, or, at the worst, within sight of it. The time was about half-past five, and the journey over the sea was only 520 miles. Gliding down I entered the clouds, and I flew through their opaqueness to a height of 1,000 feet to their under edge. I looked around. There was nothing to be seen in any direction but an angry wind-swept sea. The security of the land that I hoped to see was not there, but only these wind-swept waves, knocked up by still another terrific head-wind.

The wind's speed I estimated at about 40 to 50 miles an hour, and it was absolutely in my teeth. Hour after hour I flew on. I even reached a point where my imagination suddenly conceived the idea that I might have missed the great Continent of Australia altogether, or that my compass might be wrong or that something else might have happened. Nine hours over the sea and still no sight of land was incredible. I almost gave up hope of ever seeing Australia again, for I had only allowed myself twelve hours' petrol for this dreaded flight, when at ten o'clock in the morning, or ten hours after I had left Koepang, I saw the low coast-line of Australia.

I made a bad landfall, due to the fact that I had flown so long over the clouds and was forty miles to the south of Darwin, so I turned north and landed at Darwin at twenty minutes past ten,

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local time. I had recaptured my old record, having beaten Butler's time by six hours.

My journey to the south was much the same as my previous one, and the time I spent in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne was much the same as the year before—parties, functions, renewing acquaintances with old friends—until my departure from Melbourne, this time by boat, to England.

What a marvellous comparison, I thought, when I boarded the ship, to my flight out, where I had to work my own passage, but that six weeks of idleness on board nearly drove me mad, and all the time I wanted to get out and push. A day's run of 360 miles in twenty-four hours seemed incredibly slow, and when we passed Cape Corse, after calling at Colombo, Aden, Port Said and Naples, I could have screamed to think that we were still seven days from London, when on my outward journey to Australia I had reached the same point in the same number of hours. I arrived at Tilbury early in July that year.

From that time until my latest flight my occupation was much the same as that of any commercial air pilot. I spent one season joy-riding, which was quite the most boring six months I have ever known, although with this particular circus one had variety, inasmuch as we performed at a different town each day. However, even such change of scenery did not prevent the tedium of taking off and landing, taking off and landing,



Photo: "Foliot" Press Agency.

SCOTT AND BLACK JUST AFTER THEIR ARRIVAL AT MELBOURNE, OCTOBER 1934.

"My last word must be 'Thank you' to Tom. I shake him by the hand and I think he knows what I mean when I say I am so happy he has shared with me the distinction of winning the MacRobertson race."

The Third Record

with passengers who wished to fly just for the experience.

We flew through bad weather and good, through nearly all parts of England, Scotland and Wales, but if this six months' tour did nothing else, it certainly did give us an appreciation of our own land, for we visited the most beautiful spots, which scenery must compare favourably with that of any place in the world. I am sure we were all justly proud of this country of ours. So ended the season of 1933.

CHAPTER XV

MILDENHALL TO MELBOURNE

In which I tell of our part in the great MacRobertson race : how we arrived at Baghdad to see the dust of the Mollisons' departing Comet, how we took the lead after Allahabad and felt more confident of victory until one engine failed and we were left to do the best on one engine only, how this one engine did yeoman service and carried us across the finishing line 2 days 22 hours 54 mins. 18 secs. after we left Mildenhall.

IF I am to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth—that is the correct formula, is it not ?—of Mildenhall to Melbourne, then I have got to get back to figures and facts as they were in the beginning.

You may not remember, but I certainly can never forget, that in the early months of 1933 a great Australian patriot, Sir Macpherson Robertson, offered prize money of £15,000 for an air race from England to Australia. It was to be one of the great occasions associated with the celebrations of Victoria's centenary.

To-day I recall with amusement the almost universal apathy of aeroplane manufacturers, pilots, and public at the time. We were not very quick in the uptake then, were we ? An imaginative nation they call us, but imagination was asleep when Macpherson Robertson first called.

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Had anyone believed then in the possibility of a British 'plane's week-end trip to Australia, how different things might have been ! What speculation, what excitement, what misgivings, and what hopes in the months that intervened. There were two reasons perhaps why experts and laymen read the sporting proposition and then forgot it. In the first place the race was dated such a long way ahead ; in the second, the idea was too big for quick and easy assimilation.

I am wrong, of course, in saying that we forgot it entirely, because one day Britain awoke to find that the seed Sir Macpherson Robertson had broadcast over the face of the civilised earth had taken root and was sprouting into healthy growth. Interest, almost imperceptible at first, swiftly replaced apathy. People of vision began to talk ; men of action got a move on. Away on the horizon, as it were, had suddenly ranged the greatest and most spectacular event in the comparatively short history of aviation. Here, in the twinkling of an eye, came the dawn of another modern miracle.

It has to be confessed that aircraft manufacturers, though somewhat tardily, first grasped the significance of an event such as Sir Macpherson proposed.

British manufacturers looked at it from the viewpoint of prestige—not the prestige alone of the individual firm lucky enough to create the

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winning machine, but the prestige, also, of the Aircraft Manufacturers' Association. After all, that was the big stake of the Mildenhall to Melbourne race—not necessarily the prize-money waiting at the other end. Competition is vital to the aircraft industry, just as it is to any other, and the manufacturers knew that in entering the competitive field they must enter, if possible, to win.

Airmen and airwomen of reputation were driven to similar serious reasoning in weighing their chances in the great adventure.

It is no use arguing with oneself, "there is always the chance of being the winning pilot," and ignoring the obvious truth that the balance of prospects inclined heavily towards losing.

It did not require much mental exercise to realise that if this was to be a dash for Australia far in advance of any times hitherto established, then no man could tackle the race alone. Even before mental selection of the potential machine, even before financial calculations and arrangements, one had to decide on the co-pilot.

Strange, is it not, how, knowing a person by reputation alone, one seems to know him intimately without having yet met or even seen him? Believe it or not, that was the case with Tom Black and myself until we met at a cocktail party in London last October. We got on famously from the moment somebody introduced us and we said our "How d'ye do's."

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There and then I decided to ask Tom to be my co-pilot in the event of my ability to fix up a machine for the job. In the Aero Club next morning I said to Black: "What about teaming up with me in the MacRobertson Air Race?"

Tom did not stop to ponder.

"Yes," he answered straight out. "Good idea, Scotty. I'm with you—all the way."

Then over two cups of coffee we came to a solemn agreement that in no circumstances would either of us take a hand in the race unless we flew together. That pact cut out the possibility of having to fly with young and enthusiastic pilots of financial strength and capacity for adventure, but with none of the skill or the experience so essential in a partner on a race like the one then in prospect. Oddly enough, throughout the next few months we both received plenty of offers of this description.

January came, and the outlook seemed pretty hopeless. We were both terribly keen to compete, but the financial demands were far beyond our joint resources.

One day a certain gentleman offered us a "mount" in the race, on condition that we shared with him the prize money and other profits if we won. The arrangements had been carried as far as a dinner to celebrate the signing of the contract when the gentleman came to inform us that "unfortunately the trustees could not see their way

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clear to provide the cash for such a *crazy adventure*." Black and I were crushed with disappointment. The prospects of taking part in the race to Melbourne had receded still further.

That week-end I went out of London. Returning on the Tuesday morning the telephone bell rang just as I entered the house.

"That you, Scott?" asked a voice at the other end.

It was an official of the De Havilland Company. They knew already of our solemn agreement to fly as a team, and wanted to see Black and myself at Stag Lane immediately. Tom Black was in a nursing home at the time, so I went off to interview De Havilland's alone.

Within an hour I was dashing back to town again to meet Mr. A. O. Edwards at the Grosvenor House Hotel, of which he is chairman and managing director. In a brief business-like interview Mr. Edwards made it clear that he was determined to enter a machine, and had instructed De Havilland's to build it. In twenty minutes the whole thing was settled, signed and sealed. Tom Black and I were booked for one of the Comets.

Early in February we had a look at the machine on paper, and both of us realised that if the real thing could be produced in the workshop, then we had the right aeroplane for the job.

Delivery was promised on the first of this October, but by mid-July we were reconciled to

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the knowledge that we should be lucky to get it on the appointed day.

Throughout September we waited daily for news of the Comet, and daily we were disappointed. The first week of October passed, and still there was no aeroplane.

Test flights had been made by a De Havilland expert in an experimental 'plane, but that did not lessen our anxiety. We had sense enough to know that we should need personal experience in handling the Comet, and practice in night landings before the start of the race.

Superstitious people will say we took delivery on a bad day. On October 12th there was a banquet at Grosvenor House to participants in the race; on the thirteenth Tom Black and I went to Hatfield and saw the red Comet all ready and set.

I confess to nervous anxiety in contemplation of the first test flight. A crash, no matter how trivial, would eliminate the Comet from the race, because there would be no time for repairs before we were due at Mildenhall.

However, Black and I determined to risk a short flip to begin with, and up we went. All the time I worried about the descent, because these Comets have such a terrific landing speed. However, we managed it perfectly. I hopped out of the Comet, stood square in front of her, and said inwardly, "Well, you beauty, I still respect you, but can I fly you?"

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Next day we reported at Mildenhall.

In the final week I managed five landings. Tom did two. And, in case I forget to tell you, that week at Mildenhall, as an experience, was worse than the flight itself. It was filled with worries and anxieties, with attention to the regulations and official inspections, all leading, of course, to the night before the start.

And what a night !

Through the dark hours of the race itself I was never so uneasy as in those moments of inactivity in the cockpit of the Comet, listening to the engines turning over, and waiting for the flag to fall. It was impossible then to appreciate the enormity of the venture.

I just had time for a quick smile round, as with the two purring engines roaring into life we were off on the Baghdad trail.

I had never taken the Comet up on a full load before, but after a hundred yards I was perfectly and blissfully sure that in her we had not only a thing of beauty, but infinite power to play with.

Low mists drifted beneath us as Mildenhall passed from sight, and once over the English coastline we were swallowed in the haze of the North Sea. Almost subconsciously I seemed to understand that we were flying to Australia, but there was no evidence of the fact. Overwhelmed by the implications I turned round to Black and said, " I suppose we *are* going to Australia ? "

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Tom laughed. "I feel like that, too," he shouted back.

On previous record flights I had set out alone to beat a fixed time. Here Tom Black and I were out to create a time for the trip better than any other. How should we do it? It was not a race as I visioned it, but an attempt to get to Melbourne as quickly as we could. We knew we were up against a stiff proposition.

Inside four hours, through a hole in the clouds we saw the blue Danube. The weather bettered then, but we sensed that it would not last. As we sighted Turkey black, menacing clouds, slashing rain and blinding streaks of lightning enveloped us. I had the unhappy impression then that we were barging through an inferno.

If we lost our way over Angora we knew, although we did not communicate the fact to each other, that we should be cutting our petrol very fine on the non-stop run.

Impenetrable darkness as the Comet battled through the sky was relieved only by a few gleams of the moon. Then over Syrian territory the clouds passed, but our petrol supply was down to three hours.

Presently we hovered above and slipped beyond a small town I did not know. What we both did know, however, was that our situation was serious. We had no idea of our position, yet, on the other hand, if we flew back to the little town, and

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attempted a forced night landing, we stood a first-class chance of not getting up again.

However, of two evils we had to choose the lesser. Dropping blindly down, down, down, I sought some spot whereon to land. I spotted an aerodrome and yelled in amazement. Turning to look at Black, his eyes met mine questioningly.

"We're getting away with it, Tom," I shouted. "We're in the race with a chance." Tom smiled for the second time that day.

I flew the Comet round like mad, and landed with a whoop. We were in the R.A.F. emergency aerodrome at Kirkuk. Good fellows they were, indeed. We took aboard twenty gallons of precious spirit, and for once playing for safety first, flew cautiously on to Baghdad.

There they told us the Mollisons had left fifteen minutes earlier on a course set for Jask. The dust kicked up by their Black Comet still overhung the aerodrome; she had shaken it from her dainty fabric with a vengeance.

It was moonlight when we arrived, but daybreak as we compassed for Allahabad.

The cold of an October dawn in England was followed by unfamiliar heat and humidity. Presently our eyes ached from the wind and sun-glare of a new season in a new continent.

We had travelled past the distance calculated for the day, but we had not slept. Keyed up, I

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suppose, with excitement we remained physically strong and mentally alert as we did the four hours on and four hours off.

It was our cherished hope to land at Allahabad at the head of the field. Once in that position we were cocksure of winning barring a mechanical breakdown.

The weather report for the Allahabad-Singapore run was so bad that I kept it to myself. By that very act Tom must have guessed its nature, but asked no questions. We took off from Allahabad in trepidation and with a full load, on what we were prepared to believe must be the worst stage of the race.

Months before we had decided to fly on the direct route to Singapore and save 200 miles heedless of the extra risks. The spectacle in the ebbing sunlight and rising moon inspired terror in both of us. Our preconceived anxieties were soon very real and frightening. A great storm raged right and left of us, as clouds swept in battalions above, and still more ominous clouds rolled below. Steadily we flew on between them, with no chance now of four-hour shifts. Both of us were hard on the job, with feet on the rudder-bar and hands on the control column.

There came at last a blessed moment of relief. Clouds disappeared over a stretch of twenty miles, and I glimpsed an island that gave us our position. Down below the clouds the Comet dived to a

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thousand feet, but further we dared not go in case we hit the sea—and finished.

My one great fear was overshooting the peninsula. I groped a way down, spotted another island I knew, and realised that Singapore lay just a mere 600 miles ahead. Over Alor Star we sped almost gaily, and signalled down, "Going on to Singapore."

I had worked it out that we had sufficient petrol for the rest of the stage provided the weather did not make it impossible to land. Tom was for going back to Alor Star, but something seemed to tell me we should be all right. So we went ahead, following the coast-line.

Tom was flying now, and I dropped into sleep, if one may use that word for coma. At daybreak I opened my eyes to find the Comet over Singapore, with the flare path still brightly illumined. Joyfully I took her down.

"You're landing down wind!" yelled Tom in frantic warning.

It was too late to do anything then to correct the fault. The flare path had been divided the wrong way, but, candidly, I ought to have noticed it. We were frightfully lucky to make the landing without damage.

The lads of the R.A.F. were waiting with news of the other competitors, and inside a minute we knew that the Dutchmen were our only challenging rivals. The enthusiasm of the R.A.F. encouraged

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us tremendously, and with renewed spirits we refuelled and set off for Port Darwin.

Anxiously Tom said to me, " You sleep and I'll do all the flying." That was truly noble of him, for he, too, was done up. All the time, however, I had to remember the responsibility of landings, and Tom knew I had to pull them off. Anyhow, for hours I tried to sleep, but every time I closed my eyes I found myself in a maze of nightmares.

Past Borneo the clouds disappeared, and the promise was fine for the run to Darwin.

I hate and loathe the Timor Sea. If anything happens to the motor there, then that's the end of pilot and machine.

The fine weather began to desert us, and at nightfall low clouds forced us down close to the sea. We were flying at about a thousand feet when suddenly one of the oil pressure gauges began to flicker. Tom immediately climbed for height in case things happened. Pressure dropped from 40 to zero, and Black throttled the engine back to prevent seizing. Here was a pretty predicament. Half-way across the Timor Sea, after struggling for two days through mad endeavours, trials and tribulations, were we to be cheated by a mechanical defect ?

Not only that, but there was the terrifying prospect of helpless descent to the shark-infested waters below, and swift, certain death. In the pitch blackness we were still an hour from land.

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Suddenly we sighted Bathurst Island just where Bathurst Island ought to be. By going a long way round one is able to follow a whole series of islands from Bathurst towards Darwin. With one engine disabled completely, that is what we did in the Comet. We hugged those islands tightly till Darwin hove into view, and then prepared to go down in good order.

I was uneasy about landing the machine on one engine, but she came quietly to a standstill as the great waiting crowd dashed across the aerodrome and enclosed the Comet. We were beautifully manhandled until the mechanics rescued us and set to work by floodlight on the recalcitrant engine. They could discover no cause for the breakdown, however, and even now I do not know what's wrong.

Personally I could not bring myself to contemplate the circumstances that threatened to rob us of the chances of success.

"If we could only get the port engine to give enough revolutions off the ground," hopefully suggested Black.

"Yes—if," I answered.

But Black was quietly confident.

We took aboard just enough petrol to carry us to Charleville, and with hearts in our mouths opened the throttle. If the engine had cut out in the take-off we must have crashed. Thank Heaven, our desperate plan worked.

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For five hours we flew by the compass, and were terribly lucky to get to the little township of Mount Isa before dawn. I was at my weariest then. Fight as I might, I could not prevent my head flopping chestwards.

The remaining thousand miles to Melbourne seemed an incredible distance. I had the impression that we had been flying for centuries. Suddenly I thought to myself, "We are lost," and thereupon entered into a state of terror, which, normally, could not have existed. Then I reasoned "Why should we be lost? Here we are above Queensland, and I've been flying over Queensland for nearly four years. Of course, we are not lost really."

Eventually we picked up the Charleville railway line only twenty miles eastward of the correct landing-place.

We were bucked tremendously by Charleville's welcome, and the information that we were still eight hours ahead of the Dutch.

I had a sudden inspiration, then, to go all out for a landing at Melbourne earlier than either Black or myself had contemplated. Just as suddenly this was overshadowed by an immense desire to see the Comet get a place.

The Darwin take-off—hearts in mouths—was repeated at Charleville. There was a tail-wind with us now, and I was confident it would win the race for the Comet.

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The last six hours on the run to Melbourne were the most trying of all. Every minute seemed an hour. We lit cigarettes, had one puff, and threw them out of the window. Then we lit others and did the same.

Black and I did half an hour on and half an hour off; then ten minutes on and ten minutes off. Flying the Comet on that one engine was a terrific strain, I assure you.

Approaching Melbourne and victory I realised that the machine would not be seen to the best advantage, as, handicapped by a non-functioning engine, it could not possibly pull its true speed. That, I think, was my last coherent thought as the Comet and Tom Black and I dived landwards and went staggering across the finishing-line.

Many conclusions can be drawn from our Mildenhall to Melbourne experience; the most important, I think, being the established fact that machines with relays of pilots can reach the beautiful Australian city in five days from home.

Our final reception on Flemington Racecourse neither Black nor myself can ever forget.

We owe appreciation to such a lot of people for their goodness to us, especially to Mr. Edwards, whose kindness I hope we have repaid a little by the victory, and to the De Havilland Company for the gallant Comet. To Lord Wakefield I owe more than I could possibly write or he possibly

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wish me to say, and to my father for his amazing sympathy and help at all times I owe most.

I have come in contact, I suppose, at odd times, with all the well-known flying people of the world, and any successes I may have had have been through the inspiration of such great men as Bertie Hinkler (now dead, poor fellow !), Kingsford Smith, Lindbergh, and a host of others.

My last word must be "Thank you" to Tom. I shake him by the hand and I think he knows what I mean when I say I am so happy he has shared with me the distinction of winning the MacRobertson race.

EPILOGUE

BY

T. CAMPBELL BLACK

A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE AND
A WORD OF PRAISE

WHAT can I add to Scott's story of our trip over the 11,000 odd miles?

Let me say at once that the association has left me with a deeper sense of that instant conviction I had in London a year ago that Scott and I would prove to be mates in the air and on the ground, and develop into a team working in perfect unison.

He has already told you how we arranged to fly fifty-fifty—four hours on and off while condition and circumstance would permit. That is the symbol of our association in the little cockpit.

All the way we preserved the fifty-fifty arrangement until the situation called for a hundred per cent control. Then, through the stormcloud above the Malay coast, and again after that nasty moment when the engine packed up, half-way across the Timor Sea, both of us had to get on the job, with feet on the rudder bar and hands on the control.

Every airman will understand me when I say that unless two pilots possess perfectly attuned air sense, things are apt to go wrong up above. Charles and I co-ordinated so completely, however, that the Comet outflew the Malayan storm wrack

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triumphantly and scorned the perils on the way to Melbourne.

Our principal difference of opinion arose when Charles wanted to make Singapore, and I had a sneaking affection for Alor Star. It turned out that he chose the less dangerous course, because Alor Star Aerodrome was under water, and if I had had my way we should either have been bogged or the Comet would have packed up.

There is nothing overbearing about Charles. Always he listened to anything I had to say and we talked things over together until we reached a mutual decision. This happened at the height of each crisis—above the clouds of the Malay Peninsula, again in the Timor Sea, and above the moonlit desert of North Australia when both of us thought we were lost.

Scott at these times casually pulled out a cigarette and struck a match with rock-like hands. Before reading his story I knew he was scared, but no one would have guessed it at the time.

Lest people should misunderstand Charles's statement that the last quarter of an hour was the worst, let me explain that it was not the rain troubling us nearing Melbourne, but we were scared stiff that the engine would fail and rob us of the victory then within our grasp. Had the engine failed, the Dutchmen were sufficiently close behind us to get across the finishing line before we could hope for effective repairs.

Epilogue

Seldom has any engine had such a gruelling test as our faithful starboard motor. We knew it, and our hearts seemed to beat in tune with its throbs.

The worst experience was the Timor Sea, which I had not crossed before. However, we had a set course, and I did not worry a scrap.

Then with nightfall I remembered Scott had told me of the immense difficulty of making the right landfall at Darwin even in the day-time.

Charles was scribbling in his log as some of these reflections came to me. It did not give me much consolation to find he had written that having me with him made him feel easier about the crossing. Everybody knows now how we weathered this stretch.

Throughout the flight Charles was captain—and the landings his responsibility. Even in that terrible moment when he glided downwind on Singapore Aerodrome I felt all would be well.

It is difficult to explain the confidence one man may have in another, but without that confidence high speed, long distance flying by two pilots would be impossible. In the Singapore crisis with any other man than Scott at the controls, I should have died of heart failure.

A motorist knows the restlessness that gnaws him as he sits a passenger in another car. Multiply that again a few million times and you have the air pilot's feeling as he watches another controlling.

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Yet, in the moment before hitting the ground at Singapore, I can truthfully say I had not a scrap of the backseat driver's feeling.

Scott has told you of our first and unalterable decision not to accompany another pilot from Mildenhall to Melbourne. Surely events have shown we were right. That was the best bargain I ever made.

THE END

